



# NEWS RELEASE

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## BLOOD EMERGENCY READINESS CORPS ACTIVATED IN RESPONSE TO HURRICANE DEBBY

**(BERC Network – August 6, 2024)** – The **Blood Emergency Readiness Corps** (BERC) was activated in response to blood inventory needs on Florida’s Gulf Coast following the impact of Hurricane Debby on the region’s blood supply. Hurricane Debby made landfall on the west coast of Florida early Monday, bringing high winds and heavy rain that have caused widespread cancellation of blood drives and missed donation appointments across the region. Blood providers across the U.S. who are **on call** for BERC this week are now shipping a reserve supply of blood components needed by hospitals in the affected region.

The Blood Emergency Readiness Corps, or BERC, was established in 2021 to form an emergency blood reserve that could be utilized in the event of a sudden increase in demand for blood. BERC is comprised of blood centers from across the U.S. that have committed to reserving extra units of blood on a rotating, “on call” schedule. The additional blood products are held in reserve for any critical-need scenario, such as a natural disaster or mass casualty event. Blood components that are being shipped in Monday’s BERC activation will ensure patient care continues as SunCoast Blood Centers works to recover from the storm’s impact on blood donation.

“We are grateful to our BERC partners and especially to the volunteer blood donors who make it possible for blood providers to assist in this crisis,” said Nelson Hellwig, BERC Administrator. “The advance planning and mutual support we have developed is helping meet immediate needs in the region and will make a difference for those affected by Hurricane Debby.”

Members of BERC rotate into on call status once every three weeks, reserving units of type O-positive and type O-negative red blood cells for emergency release in a BERC activation. The following community-based blood centers are shipping blood components as part of Monday’s activation: Blood Bank of Hawaii, Houchin Community Blood Bank, ImpactLife, Inova Blood Donor Services, LifeStream Blood Bank, Mississippi Blood Services, Northern California Community Blood Bank, South Texas Blood & Tissue, Stanford Blood Center, Vitalant, and We Are Blood.

“In an emergency, it’s critical to have a sufficient supply of blood components available at a moment’s notice,” said Don Campbell, Chief Operating Officer, SunCoast Blood Centers. “Support from Blood Emergency Readiness Corps ensures our ability to continue providing this lifesaving resource for hospitals in our region in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Debby.”

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Today's activation marks the eighth time since its inception in September 2021 that the BERC Network has been called upon to provide blood during a national emergency. Blood providers aligned with the BERC network remind potential donors that the need for blood is constant and encourage all potential donors to schedule appointments for donation with their local blood provider. America's Blood Centers (ABC) offers an online tool to help donors find a nearby ABC member center at <https://americasblood.org/for-donors/find-a-blood-center/>.

A separate BERC activation was also called just last week following a ransomware event that affected critical software systems at OneBlood, the not-for-profit blood center that serves more than 250 hospitals in the southeastern United States. "Hurricane Debby and the ransomware event reminds us of the importance of blood providers in the U.S. working together in times of crisis," said BERC Administrator Nelson Hellwig. "Blood providers supporting needs in Florida today may require emergency assistance in their own region in the future, and BERC members will be ready to provide that support."

## About Blood Emergency Readiness Corps

The Blood Emergency Readiness Corps (BERC), a collaborative effort of 37 community blood centers, was founded in 2021 to help blood providers meet immediate transfusion needs when faced with a large-scale emergency. Through BERC, participating blood centers from across the United States have joined forces to prepare for mass transfusion disasters, ensuring their ability to meet emerging needs without delay or uncertainty.

To see a list of participating blood centers and to learn about recent [BERC activations](#), visit [www.bloodemergencyreadinesscorps.org](http://www.bloodemergencyreadinesscorps.org).



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