

Severe winter weather in the Midwest has impacted the steady flow of blood and platelet donations through the American Red Cross.

Because donors are not able to safely travel to their donation appointments, area blood drives have been cancelled.

Eighteen blood drives in the Midwest Blood Services Region of the American Red Cross were cancelled over three days earlier in December, resulting in more than 900 fewer donations. The Midwest Region serves more than 80 hospitals in Nebraska, Iowa, Colorado and Kansas.

As area residents dig out from the snow and ice, and traveling is deemed to be safe again, the American Red Cross urges eligible donors to make a donation appointment to help replenish lifesaving blood supplies. Platelet and type O negative blood donations are especially needed.

Type O negative is the universal blood type and can potentially be transfused to anyone. A recent surge in patient usage has increased the need of this blood type.

With a shelf life of just five days, platelet donations are constantly needed, especially when severe weather affects the normal steady flow of donations. Platelets are used to help cancer patients, who rely on transfusions following chemotherapy and radiation treatments.

Upcoming blood donation opportunities

The Imperial Community Blood Drive is scheduled for Thursday, Jan. 14, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Zion Lutheran Church in Imperial.

Contact Karen Hayes at 882-5645 to schedule your appointment. Walk-ins are welcome.

How to donate blood

Simply call 1-800-GIVE-LIFE (1-800-448-3543) or visit [givebloodgivelife.org](http://givebloodgivelife.org) to make an appointment or for more information.

All blood types are needed to ensure a reliable supply for patients. A blood donor card or driver's license, or two other forms of identification, are required at check-in.

Individuals who are 17 years of age (16 with parental permission in some states), weigh at least 110 pounds and are in generally good health may be eligible to donate blood. High school students and other donors 18 years of age and younger also have to meet certain height and weight requirements.

About the American Red Cross

Governed by volunteers and supported by giving individuals and communities, the American Red Cross is the single largest supplier of blood products to hospitals throughout the United States.

While local hospital needs are always met first, the Red Cross also helps ensure no patient goes without blood no matter where or when they need it.

In addition to providing nearly half of the nation's blood supply, the Red Cross provides relief to victims of disaster, trains millions in lifesaving skills, serves as a communication link between U.S. military members and their families and assists victims of international disasters or conflicts.