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## Ventura County Fire Department Launches Emergency Blood Transfusion Program

THOUSAND OAKS, CA - The Ventura County Fire Department (VCFD) has become one of the first fire departments in California to implement an emergency blood transfusion program—marking a significant advancement in prehospital emergency care. Based on case frequency estimates and an analysis of incidents from July 2017 to July 2024, it is projected that 3–7 trauma patients per month may have benefited from this programs prehospital blood transfusions.

“This program marks a groundbreaking advancement in emergency medicine,” said Chief Gardner. “By equipping our rescue ambulances with whole blood, our firefighter-paramedics can deliver life-saving transfusions at the scene—significantly improving patient outcomes when every second counts.”



This initiative began in October 2023, when VCFD Firefighter-Paramedic Edward Campana identified the critical benefits of whole blood transfusion at a medical conference. His vision ignited a collaborative effort among VCFD’s Emergency Medical Services (EMS) division, medical director Dr. Neil Canby, and vital agency partners—Ventura County Medical Center, the Ventura County EMS Agency, and Vitalant Blood Donation.

“Ventura County Medical Center is proud to be part of this multidisciplinary effort,” said Dr. Thomas Duncan, Trauma Medical Director. “Improving prehospital blood administration aligns with the American College of Surgeons Committee on Trauma's national goals to increase survival rates in trauma patients.”

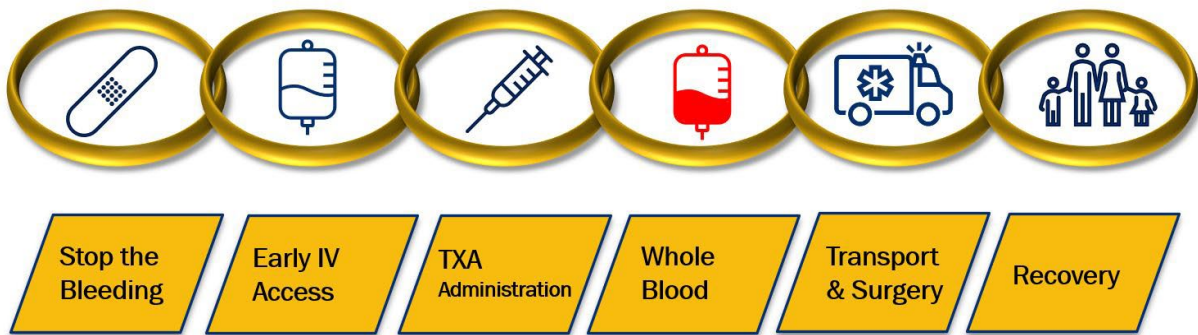
"The EMS system in Ventura County has long been recognized as a high-functioning, innovative system. This collaborative effort demonstrates our commitment to providing our patients with exceptional, cutting-edge care. The addition of whole blood to our treatment protocols further narrows the gap between critical interventions performed in the hospital versus in the field.” Said Dr. Daniel Shepherd, Medical Director, Ventura County EMS Agency. “Our goal is that this will result in improved outcomes for our sickest patients.”

The program ensures that whole blood is now available on VCFD rescue ambulances, enabling firefighter-paramedics to stabilize severely injured patients before hospital arrival.

“The speed of transfusion is crucial in trauma cases,” said Dr. Jonathan Hughes, Medical and Laboratory Director for Vitalant California. “This program is possible thanks to the generosity of volunteer blood donors, whose contributions are saving lives every day. We encourage all eligible individuals to donate and support our community’s blood supply.”

“Less than 2% of EMS agencies have implemented prehospital blood programs. Ventura County Fire Department and their partners have developed a high quality program that other agencies in California, and across the country, can follow to ensure widespread access to this lifesaving capability.” Randall Schaefer, DNP, RN. Schaefer is a Retired Army Nurse with multiple combat deployments and CEO of Schaefer Consulting, who has been assisting agencies across the country.

Launching this program required specialized paramedic training, new operational protocols, and coordination of a secure blood supply. Thanks to the commitment of all participating agencies, Ventura County now stands at the forefront of emergency medical innovation.



*Graphic: Whole Blood added to the Trauma Chain of Survival.*

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