

# WHOLE BLOOD PROGRAM

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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### What is the purpose of the whole blood program?

The whole blood program equips our emergency responders with the ability to administer life-saving whole blood transfusions in the field, significantly improving survival rates for patients experiencing severe blood loss.

It is designed to close the gap between the time of injury and definitive care by providing immediate blood replacement at the scene or enroute to the hospital.

### Why is whole blood critical for trauma care?

Trauma is the #1 cause of death for people under age 45, and upward of 40% of these patients could survive with immediate blood transfusions in the field.

In emergencies, there's no time to test a patient's blood type. Using whole blood ensures safe transfusion for everyone, regardless of their blood type. Whole blood has everything the body needs to replace lost blood, like red blood cells, plasma, and platelets.

### How does the program work?

Medical Service Officers (MSOs) from Central Pierce Fire & Rescue and Tacoma Fire Department will carry whole blood in temperature-controlled coolers on emergency vehicles. If someone is experiencing severe blood loss, our MSOs can give them a blood transfusion immediately, even before they get to the hospital.

MSOs are tenured paramedics who have received advanced training, respond to critical medical calls, and provide clinical oversight and medical training for fire and EMS providers.

### Who is involved?

This program is a partnership between Central Pierce Fire & Rescue, Tacoma Fire Department, Bloodworks Northwest, MultiCare, and the MultiCare Health Foundation.

### How will this program help our community?

Roughly 180 fire departments across the country have a whole blood program. Central Pierce Fire & Rescue and Tacoma Fire Department are proud to be the first in Pierce County to adopt this life-saving initiative.

Programs like this are already making a difference in other parts of the country, showing promising results in saving lives. [Read this story about a mom and baby whose lives were saved thanks to a whole blood program in Colorado Springs.](#)



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### **What if my beliefs or preferences do not allow me to receive blood transfusions?**

We encourage community members who do not wish to be given whole blood due to religious or personal beliefs to carry a “no blood transfusion” card with them. Our first responders will check for the card prior to giving whole blood and will respect the patient’s wishes.

### **How can the community support the program?**

Every two seconds, someone in the U.S. needs blood. Your blood donation could save a life right here in our community. Donating blood through Bloodworks Northwest is one of the best ways to support this program and help ensure we have enough for emergencies.

### **Is it safe and how is the blood stored?**

Donated blood is collected and processed through Bloodworks Northwest’s safety protocols before being used for transfusion. By using type O blood, which is safe for all blood types, the program ensures that care can begin immediately, even before a patient's blood type is known.

Whole blood is kept in special coolers that maintain the correct temperature in the field, ensuring it’s ready when needed.

### **Is any blood wasted?**

The goal of the whole blood program is to save lives, and we carefully manage inventory based on usage trends to minimize any potential waste.

### **How is the program funded?**

Equipment for the whole blood program is generously supported by the MultiCare Health Foundation. Additional program expenses are funded through each fire department’s existing budgets.

### **Is whole blood available now?**

Yes, the whole blood program was deployed on January 24, 2025. Since launching the program, Central Pierce Fire & Rescue and Tacoma Fire Department have administered whole blood transfusions in the field several times.

