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KEVIN BLOYE, spokesman for Georgia Hospital Association

Blood warning issued in two states

White particles found in Red Cross supplies

By Keith Parsons
ASSOCIATED PRESS

ATLANTA — Hospitals in Georgia and northern Florida were warned yesterday to temporarily stop using some blood from the American Red Cross because it was feared contaminated with mysterious white particles.

The Red Cross reported that the particles are not infectious agents and that no harmful effects in patients have been reported.

The particles probably came from the plastic bags in which the blood was collected, said Chris Hrouda, Red Cross chief executive for blood services in the Southern region.

The Red Cross said that so far, 110 of the approximately 4,000 units stored at

its regional center have been found to be contaminated. But the agency was unable to say whether any contaminated blood reached any of the more than 140 hospitals it supplies in Georgia and northern Florida.

Members of the Georgia Hospital Association were advised not to use the blood, forcing them to postpone elective surgery and use backup supplies of blood for emergencies. The association consists of 185 hospitals, but not all of them get blood from the Red Cross.

The Red Cross said it is working with a maker of blood bags and the Food and Drug Administration to find out how the contamination happened.

Hrouda said that only blood in bags manufactured by Baxter International Inc. was contaminated. Baxter did not immediately return calls for comment.

The contaminant can be seen with the naked eye and is practically translucent, said Dr. Christopher D. Hillyer, an Emory

University professor who works with the Red Cross. He said the blood could still turn out to be usable.

"We're taking more of a cautious approach and putting the blood on hold," said Kevin Bloye, a spokesman with the Georgia Hospital Association. "For some of our hospitals without a large supply of blood in reserve, that's a big problem."

"Blood is available for emergency surgeries," said Marcy Blount, spokeswoman for the Red Cross Blood Services Southern region. "We are asking hospitals not to use some of the blood in their inventories while we are having a quality assurance review."

Emory University Hospital expected to receive blood from outside the region by the afternoon, spokesman Brad Minor said.

"It hasn't affected any patient care," Minor said. He added: "We deal with blood shortages all the time, so it's nothing new."



AP PHOTO

Hospitals in Georgia and northern Florida were told yesterday to stop using some blood. In Atlanta, a donor gave blood yesterday.

BOSTON GLOBE
Boston, MA

Saturday Circulation — 458,760
Daily

FEBRUARY 1, 2003