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**Media Contacts:**

Vermont Department of Health  
802-863-7281

**Vermonters Urged to Join Health Commissioner in Donating Blood to Meet Urgent Need**

BURLINGTON – To help bring attention to an immediate need for blood and platelet donors, Health Commissioner Harry Chen, MD will literally lend an arm to the American Red Cross, and donate blood at 2:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 31, 2017, at the Burlington Blood Donation Center located at 32 North Prospect Street. Dr. Chen will be joined by Kevin Mazuzan, executive director of the Red Cross in Vermont.

Severe weather in the region and across the U.S. has triggered an emergency need for donors, and the Department of Health and the Red Cross of New Hampshire and Vermont are encouraging Vermonters to make an appointment to donate blood and platelets.

“Since the beginning of the year, severe weather has forced the cancellation of more than 250 blood drives in 30 states, resulting in over 10,500 uncollected donations,” said Maria Devlin, CEO for the New Hampshire and Vermont Red Cross. “The only source of blood and platelets for patients in need are healthy, volunteer donors. I encourage donors to schedule an appointment and invite a family member, friend or co-worker to donate too.”

Dr. Chen said that maintaining a steady blood supply is critical. “As an emergency physician, I know first hand how immediate a crisis a low blood supply can be. Donated blood only has a shelf life of 42 days and platelets just five days, so they must constantly be replenished,” said Dr. Chen.

According to the Red Cross, hospital needs for blood products have remained steady in our region. “The Red Cross depends on volunteer donors to keep up with the demand,” Dr. Chen said. “I urge Vermonters to join me in helping save the lives of our friends, neighbors and people across the country – one pint at a time.”

**To make an appointment to give as soon as possible**, use the Blood Donor App, visit [redcrossblood.org](http://redcrossblood.org) or call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767).

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