



The Navajo Nation Council - Office of the Speaker

Contact: Joshua Lavar Butler, Communications Director

Phone: (928) 871-7160

Cell: (928) 255-2946

Fax: (928) 871-7255

joshualavarbutler@navajo.org

joshualavarbutler@yahoo.com

www.navajonationcouncil.org

February 7, 2008

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Speaker Morgan encourages Chapter cooperation in addressing emergency assistance

Emergency Operations Center flooded with phone calls

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – The Honorable Speaker Lawrence T. Morgan (Iyanbito/Pinedale) and the 21st Navajo Nation Council is highly encouraging Chapter cooperation in addressing the emergency situation that the Navajo Nation is currently experiencing.

The Office of the Speaker is working in cooperation with the Office of the President & Vice President, the Office of Emergency Management, and the Navajo Department of Health to assist Navajos families affected by the emergency conditions.

Emergency task force workers continue to work late into the night assisting families with situations caused by the current conditions around the reservation. The Office of Emergency Management (OEM) workers are currently operating out of a modular facility called the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) situated at the Navajo Nation Training Center in Window Rock.

The EOM and the Office of the Speaker continue to receive calls from citizens complaining that their needs are not being addressed by their Chapters. Therefore, Speaker Morgan is encouraging the Chapters to do what they can to assist our Navajo people and is also encouraging Navajo people to continue to seek assistance from their local Chapters.

Lorie Lee, Deputy Public Information Officer with EOM, hopes that more attention will be brought to the public about the emergency situations that are occurring out on the Navajo Nation. "We need to bring this situation to the attention of the local community leaders and Chapter officials – they need to take this situation seriously."

"Chapters should be dealing with these circumstances," Speaker Morgan said. "They should be doing assessments of what the Navajo people need."

Lee explained that this is only the beginning, because run-off from the melting snow will continue to occur, which will eventually turn to mud.

Lee added that complaints about Chapter officials and Chapter Coordinators continue to flood their inbound call center. The majority of the complaints deal with the lack of involvement of the local Chapters.

Lee explained that the conditions and problems will continue to occur, until a plan is put in place by the local Chapters to address this emergency situation.

Speaker Morgan said that our Navajo people need help out there and the people that really need the assistance are not getting it. "There are people out there that have critical medical needs - they are the main ones that should be receiving help from the

Chapters.”

The Chapters should be making attempts to put an emergency plan in place and to open up communication with various outlets across the Navajo Nation. Chapter contacts should be established and this should be available after hours as well.

According to Lee, the EOC will continue to operate their emergency management command post and are willing to offer technical support and supplemental support to the Chapters.

The EOM is willing to continue to educate the Chapter officials out there and Lee said that the EOM is there for them.

It was also explained that the Chapters have received the funds, but there is no emergency action plan to expedite it. The EOM does not have the direct funds to help the Chapter's constituents.

Lee was excited to report that several Council Delegates visited the EOM this past week and offered their encouragement and expressed appreciation for the hard work that the EOM is doing on behalf of the Navajo people.

Lee said that a lot of Chapters do not know what to do and the EOM is able to assist Chapters in areas that they cannot cover, but Chapters should make all attempts to remedy the emergencies of their citizens.

“Chapters need to put their emergency action plans together and do all they can to utilize their resources and their funds to help our Navajo people,” Speaker Morgan said. “Chapters should not be turning the Navajo people away, they should be doing all they can to help them.”

Speaker Morgan and the 21st Navajo Nation Council thank the staff manning the Emergency Operations Center. “The EOM have undertaken a tremendous task to help our Navajo people.”

Morgan thanks the Chapters that have quickly initiated plans to help our people during this emergency. Lorie Lee mentioned that the Chapters of Sawmill, Dilkon, and Greasewood Springs are just a few Chapters that have organized and pulled together resources to help our Navajo people.

Speaker Morgan also thanks the efforts of BHP Billiton for providing coal to the three Navajo communities of Newcomb, Shiprock, and Huerfano. BHP Billiton provided coal free of charge and assisted with loading two belly-dump trailers.

Chad Pfeiffer, Tribal Governmental Affairs Representative with BHP Billiton, said that they are currently processing further requests to meet the needs of Navajo citizens. The company regularly provides local chapters with coal during the winter months.

Norman Benally of BHP Billiton added that the company is pleased to be able to offer assistance and support to the communities during these difficult times.

“Our work is not yet completed,” Speaker Morgan added. “There is still more assistance needed in the remote areas. Our Navajo people are in need of wood and the Chapters should be resourceful in providing assistance to those in dire need.”

According to a press release from the EOM, emergency response priorities are medical needs, roads, food, and water.

For more information, contact Joshua Lavar Butler with the Office of the Speaker at 928-871-6384.