



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Council Delegate Walter Phelps welcomes Federal Communications Commission officials to the community of Leupp

LEUPP, Ariz. – On Tuesday, Council Delegate Walter Phelps (Cameron, Coalmine Canyon, Leupp, Tolani Lake, Tsidi To ii) welcomed officials from the Federal Communications Commission’s Office of Native Affairs and Policy to the community of Leupp, as they toured several areas on the Navajo Nation to gain a firsthand perspective on the many challenges that emergency first responders contend with on a daily basis, due to the lack of adequate telecommunication infrastructure in remote areas.

FCC-ONAP chief Matthew Duchesne and deputy chief of the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, were among the officials who met at the Leupp Chapter with

Delegate Phelps and officials with the Navajo Nation Telecommunications Regulatory Commission, Navajo Nation Fire Department, Dilkon Police Department, Navajo Nation Department of Emergency Management, Navajo Nation Washington Office, and the Office of the Speaker.

In his opening remarks, Delegate Phelps highlighted concerns over recent shootings of livestock in and around the community of Leupp, in which rangers and other authorities were unable to respond in a timely manner due to the difficulty in communicating and searching for the exact location of the incidents. He noted that in any type of emergency situation, first responders often



PHOTO: Council Delegate Walter Phelps meets with first responders and Federal Communications Commission officials at the Leupp Chapter in Leupp, Ariz. on Feb. 27, 2018.

have to rely on landmarks or other indicators to locate the scenes of accidents or incidences involving victims and perpetrators.

Dilkon police lieutenant Emerson Lee described a situation in which a 9-1-1 call regarding a vehicle accident that occurred approximately eight miles from the Leupp Chapter house was received by the city of Flagstaff, and then transferred to police in Tuba City because the responders in Flagstaff could not determine the location of the accident. An officer had to travel 85-miles to the scene of the accident where he met paramedics, who were unable to save the life of one victim.

Fire Department chief Larry Chee said having emergency calls “bounced” from one dispatcher to another is very common and delays the response time. He added that many of their personnel rely on their personal cell phones when determining the location of an emergency, and in cases of fire emergencies the average response time is approximately 50 minutes.

FCC-ONAP chief Matthew Duchesne, who was appointed to the position in November 2017, said the information and tour provided by the Navajo Nation was very valuable in terms of familiarizing his office with the challenges so they may determine how the FCC may help the need for better communication for first responders.

According to the FCC, the Office of Native Affairs and Policy serves as the commission’s catalyst to help improve the level of broadband, telecommunications, and broadcast deployment throughout Indian Country. The office represents the FCC in government-to-government consultation with sovereign tribal nations, works with other FCC offices and bureaus to develop and implement policies for assisting Native communities, and ensures that Native concerns and voices are considered in all relevant commission proceedings and initiatives.

Delegate Phelps thanked the FCC for meeting with the Nation’s leadership and officials to learn more about the challenges with emergency responses and the lack of adequate telecommunications infrastructure and said he is hopeful that all sides will continue working together to develop solutions that help Navajo communities.

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