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Navajo President Shelly Ensures a Healthy Work Environment for DODE

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly said appropriate measures are being taken to ensure that conditions Department of Diné Education offices are cleaner for DODE employees. The offices are in the Education Center.

“We are going to make sure that we clean the offices to reduce mold spores and want to ensure that our workers have a safe and healthy work place. The Department of Diné Education has many projects they are working on to better the educational future of our children and our workers need healthy conditions in their work space,” President Shelly said.

The DODE offices were closed Monday due to cleaning after tests confirmed a higher than average mold spore count was found after air and on surfaces testing for mold in the DODE offices. Navajo Nation Facilities Maintenance department were slated to clean the offices to reduce mold spores in the offices.

Navajo Nation Occupational Safety and Health Administration initially confirmed higher than average mold spores was present in the DODE offices on Wednesday afternoon, which prompted a closure of the DODE offices.

Mold is commonly found in air we breathe, but elevated levels can be a health risk, Navajo health officials said in a meeting last week.

Since then, EnviroScience further tested for mold and is expected to deliver a full report regarding their findings early this week, including findings from a HVAC system inspection. However, preliminary reports that mold spore counts are not nearly as high as those that prompted the mold remediation of Administration Complexes 1 and 2.

“We know our employees are concerned about the mold in DODE. But we need to keep in mind that the mold infestation in Administration Buildings 1 and 2 were

much higher. A thorough cleaning of the offices and ducts will help reduce the mold count,” President Shelly said.

Facility maintenance personnel added that ducts in the offices were also covered limiting the amount of air circulation in the building, which reduces airflow and allows for dust and mold build up.

After the cleaning, the offices are expected to be tested for mold again. In addition, the full report from EnviroScience will provide officials more information about other steps that may need to be taken to further eradicate the mold in the DODE offices.

“We want to see the report from EnviroScience so we have a better understanding of what needs to be done to ensure a healthy environment for our employees,” President Shelly said.

The Office of the Controller, which occupies the auditorium of the Education Center, is expected to remain open after testing showed average mold counts. About 90 employees at DODE were affected by Monday’s office closure.

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