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OPVP EXTEND CONDOLENCES TO LEVIER FAMILY, EMPHASIZE SAFETY IN FLOOD CONDITIONS TO ALL NAVAJO AGENCIES

TOHATCHI, N.M.-President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez were saddened to learn about a tragic accident that took place in Tohatchi, N.M., involving a father and daughter who were swept away in flash flood waters ultimately losing their lives. This accident has devastated the community.

It has been reported that Jay Levier entered floodwaters after his daughter Ashley fell in trying to save her dog.

"We need to constantly remind our Navajo people to stay away from floodwaters, flood zones and to be aware of the power of flood waters. The bodies of Jay and his daughter Ashley were said have been washed five miles downstream," Vice President Jonathan Nez said. "It's terrible, yet it also exemplifies the power of our washes and rivers during flash floods. Flood waters are not to be taken lightly."

Several Agencies across the Navajo Nation have recently been struck with flash floods resulting from monsoon down-pour. Flash flooding has washed out roads, caused severe damage to homes, and it has even caused both injury and death.

"It's heartbreaking to hear about this," said President Russell Begaye. "The Office of the President and Vice President would like to offer prayers and condolences to the Levier family at this time. The lives we are given are sacred and any loss of life is completely tragic and devastating."

Heavy rainfall can cause water levels to rise rapidly in washes and rivers. When waterways get flooded, OPVP is reminding everyone to stay away from flooded areas. Make sure your elders and children area not near flooded washes or ditches.

Many of our Navajo people are farmers who tend to cattle and sheep, we are also reminding our farmers to make sure their

livestock are not left near flooded waterways. Floodwater currents can sweep livestock away very easily.

On Sunday, Aug. 8, President Begaye and Vice President Nez signed a Declaration of Emergency for Communities Affected by Monsoon Storms. This was the day after certain areas of Shiprock, N.M., were hit with flash flooding. The instances of flash flooding continue.

"When I visited the area, I saw cars that had been moved miles by floodwaters. There were mobile homes that had been moved off their foundations and homes that had lost everything inside to water damage," President Begaye said. "Floodwaters can be very powerful."

If you live in or near a flood zone, please use extreme precaution in flash flood situations. Residents in Shiprock who lived near Salt Creek said they could hear the waters starting to rush and they noticed how fast the water levels were rising.

Always be aware of water and flood levels in extreme weather conditions. Use precaution when considering the safety of yourself, your family and even your livestock and pets.

"President and I have seen the after effects of communities hit by flash floods and it can be tremendous," Vice President Jonathan Nez said. "We cannot reiterate the importance of safety and precaution enough when it comes to dealing with flash flood situations."

OPVP would like to extend their gratitude to the first responders on the scene in Tohatchi and also the New Mexico State Police, the Navajo Nation Police Department and the McKinley County Fire and Rescue.

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