



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JANUARY 24, 2017

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President Begaye and Vice President Nez Sign Declaration of Emergency

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.— The Navajo Nation has declared a state of emergency in response to the winter storm that lashed the Nation.

On Jan. 23, the Navajo Nation Commission on Emergency Management convened to issue a declaration of emergency. President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez signed the emergency declaration on Jan. 24.

President Begaye urged tribal members to look after each other and enjoy the blessing of precipitation, which will lead to a fertile spring and summer season.

“Today, we know there’s emergencies. It’s very muddy and school buses are getting stuck. There’s a lot of snow out there. Be cautious when you are traveling,” President Begaye said.

He said chapters that have declared emergencies can now utilize monies that have been identified for emergency purposes.

“Constituents at the chapter level are requesting wood, coal, water, medication, and food. These funds can be used for that,” he added. “Think of your elders first.”

President Begaye and Vice President Nez signed into law CEM 17-01-23, making the emergency declaration effective immediately.

“Thank you, President Begaye, for signing the Navajo Nation Declaration of Emergency. Chapters, we are encouraging you to maintain your receipts, records and paperwork for reimbursements of any loss.” said Vice President Nez.

The \$1 million threshold for the Stafford Act has been scaled back to \$250,000 for emergency reimbursement from FEMA, he added.

“Sometimes, it was very difficult for the Navajo Nation to meet the \$1 million threshold, although we often exceed this threshold but oftentimes the required receipts and records for the



Vice President Jonathan Nez spoke to division directors and other Navajo Nation staff at a meeting held at NDOT regarding the Emergency Declaration. He encouraged chapters to track all their costs and maintain proper records and receipts.

reimbursements are not maintained. We need to keep those receipts for reimbursements and we need your help,” Vice President Nez said.

CEM Chairman Herman Shorty described the situation as fluid and underscored the need to maintain communications between all entities responding to emergency calls.

“We had calls from Community Health Representatives in Shonto requesting assistance from the chapters to deliver fuel and medication. We need to keep each other informed and most importantly, track costs associated with the emergency,” Shorty said.

Apache County District 2 declared an emergency on Jan. 20 and was on call throughout the weekend to clear roads, deliver wood and conduct checks on high-risk individuals in remote locations.

The county deployed their incident command system in response to emergencies. Officials and staff from the county worked with Community Health Representatives to conduct

welfare checks on individuals in remote areas.

On Jan. 24, officials from the Office of the President and Vice President, Commission on Emergency Management, Department of Emergency Management, Division of Public Safety, Department of Forestry, Division of Health, Public Health and Emergency Preparation, Division of Transportation, Office of the Controller, CHR, Navajo EPA, and Department of Justice reconvened at the Navajo Transportation Complex to provide updates.

Thirteen chapters declared emergencies in response to the storms. The emergency declarations were primarily to address issues from muddy roads, including constituent's needs such as wood, coal, water, and food.

"Our priority are the lives of Navajo people," said OPVP Chief of Staff Arbin Mitchell.

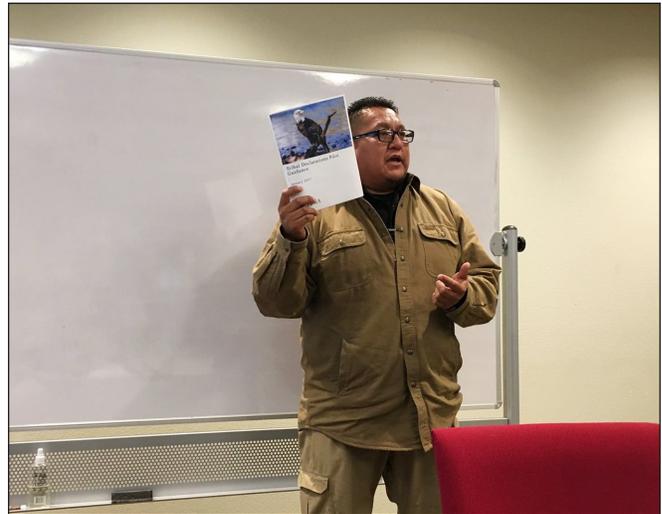
He noted that although many families have strong ties to livestock, the main priority are human lives.

According to Harland Cleveland, director of DEM, there have been no reports of property damage, loss of life, or injuries resulting from the storm.

"Capturing data is important. Of the 110 chapters, only 17 chapters have responded with situation reports from the storm. Thirteen chapters declared emergencies," Cleveland said.

Data capturing from the incident report forms, road assessments, labor and equipment forms, purchasing receipts and other documents will be important for the reimbursement claim from FEMA, he added.

Regina Holyan, an attorney with Navajo DOJ, said she will be working with DEM on documentation requirements from FEMA.



Director of Emergency Management, Harland Cleveland said thus far there have been no reports of property damage, injury or loss of life.

"We need to document that we have reached at least \$250,000 to be eligible. These documents will be exhibits to show FEMA how much it's costing us to address this emergency," Holyan said.

Vice President Nez requested balances from the chapter emergency funds.

He said checking on elders and neighbors in remote areas is the responsibility of everybody at the local level.

"Don't just depend on the government or the CHRs. Check on your families and neighbors," Vice President Nez said. "We need to return to our fundamental teaching, like helping one another.

"Preparing during the summer for the winter ahead is a teaching we need to re-instill into our people," he added.

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