

FROM THE NAVAJO NATION
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CHURCH ROCK FLOOD RESULTS IN TWO NAVAJO FATALITIES

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. - A Navajo father and son were killed Thursday when they were trapped in their vehicle that got caught in a wash during a flash flood at Church Rock, N.M.

Darrell Luther, 29, of Pinedale, N.M., and two-year-old Damani Luther died when their Chevrolet Celebrity got caught in the flood waters as Mr. Luther attempted to cross a flooded wash.

Following torrential rain in Church Rock, N.M., Mariano Lake Rescue 19 received a report of a one-vehicle rollover on Uphill Road at 9:55 p.m. The team responded and located a vehicle floating in a wash with two fatalities.

The crossing had apparently collapsed in a flash flood while the driver was crossing and the sedan was swept into the water. After the water receded, the vehicle was embedded in the sand at the bottom of the wash. The bodies were transported to Cope Mortuary in Gallup, N.M.

The community of Church Rock and surrounding areas were flooded. The rains resulted in a broken water line, leaving residents without water.

Navajo Tribal Utility Authority is repairing the water lines. Service is expected to return Saturday afternoon. The Community Pantry from Gallup has donated bottled drinking water. The Emergency Operation Center in Window Rock transported 100 cases of bottled water Friday afternoon.

The Church Rock Chapter House will remain open throughout the emergency. The Incident Command Post has been established at the Church Rock Chapter. Incident Commander is Robinson Kelly.

In the Central Navajo Agency, the communities of Pinon, Whippoorwill and Cottonwood were also flooded. An Incident Command Post was re-opened at Whippoorwill Chapter House Thursday. The Incident Commander is Sgt. Dempsey Harvey.

Reports from the field included one pregnant woman who was rescued from the flooded area and taken to Keams Canyon Hospital safely, and a man who had fallen off a horse was taken to Pinon Clinic. Occupants of a car that was caught in flood waters were rescued safely.

With more rain in the forecast for the rest of the weekend, travel is

discouraged and it is strongly advised that people return home early since thunderstorm activity begins in the afternoon.

The Emergency Operation Center strongly advises the public not to cross flooded roadways or try to beat the oncoming flood. If you get stuck in the mud, stay put. Do not attempt to use side roads when road closures occur. All dirt roads are potential hazards for mud and flood.

The Emergency Operation Center also stresses that parents watch their children. There are children seen playing in flood waters. Not only is the current very strong, it is also contaminated and filled with large and small debris that can force a body into the water.

School busses, cars and trucks can be carried by strong currents.

The Department of Emergency Management in Window Rock has sandbags upon request. The phone number is (928) 871-6892.

Make sure you have an adequate supply of food, water, and medicine in case you get stranded for several days.

Emergency personnel were out in the flood-affected areas doing assessments today.

The Emergency Operation Center will remain open throughout the weekend.

The EOC Commander, Johnny Johnson encourages the public to cooperate with emergency personnel. The EOC phone number is (928) 871-6581 or 871-6363.

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