



## The 21<sup>st</sup> Navajo Nation Council

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### Navajo Nation Chapters begin spending much-needed emergency funding

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – The \$1 million appropriation passed by the 21<sup>st</sup> Navajo Nation Council on Jan. 22 for the 2010 Operation Snowfall has finally been signed and made law by Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley Jr.

The appropriation is now in the hands of the Navajo Nation's 110 chapters. The amount of funds funneled to each chapter is based on two different distribution formulas – equal distribution and registered voter distribution per chapter.

The registered voter distribution formula funneled monies to chapters based off of the Navajo Board of Election Supervisors registered voter file as of Sept. 19, 2006. Based on this formula, chapters with larger registered voter precincts such as Shiprock, Chinle and To Nanees Dizi (Tuba City) received the largest amounts of money. As with the equal distribution formula, all 110 chapters received \$4,545.45 each.

By agency synopsis, the 31 chapters in Eastern Agency received a total of \$261,489.83; Fort Defiance Agency obtained \$250,062.50 for its 27 chapters; Shiprock Agency was allocated \$186,894.22 for 20 chapters; Western Agency received \$170,128.68 for 18 chapters; and Chinle Agency received \$131,424.81 for its 14 chapters.

Chapter Services Coordinator Ella Benally of Forest Lake said the money allocated to her chapter would be used to address the wear and tear of its heavy equipment and other areas affected by the snow storm. Forest Lake received a total amount of \$6,763.78 for emergency relief.

"The snow is melting and roads are open. Some areas have mud, and potholes are forming on the roads. I know the main road to the Kayenta mine is clear but there are still some residents who live off the main road where muddy conditions remain. There are still four homes we have not gotten to," said Benally.

Peabody Coal Company has also cooperated with Forest Lake officials to help access roads. Some areas have received up to five feet of snow.

At Crystal Chapter, the Community Services Coordinator Veda Franciso said the money allocated to them will be used to clear roads, hire people to help clear roads and buy more diesel fuel. Crystal received a total \$8,186.30 in relief funding.

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"During the planning meeting held last Tuesday, the community said priority will be given to the roads," Francisco said. "We want to use the money to hire people who have tractors in the community because our chapter only has one grader and one operator."

"Over the weekend, Crystal received an additional six inches of snow and people are calling again for road grading," Francisco added. "There is an 86-year-old woman at White Clay who still needs her road opened to her residence. I'm disappointed in Emergency Management and the Navajo Nation."

The Fort Defiance Agency Local Governance Support Center said every constituent on the Fort Defiance Agency had been reached and the monies allocated to those chapters will be used for the snow-mud operation.

Council Delegate Hope MacDonald Lone Tree (Coalmine Canyon/Toh Nanees Dizi) explained that about one-third of the \$1 million allocation to chapters came from the Public Safety budget which means that some of Public Safety positions have been eliminated to free up money for the chapters to spend on their relief efforts.

However, chapters have direct access to those monies public safety services and emergency management would provide.

"We took public safety positions, now we have money going to the chapters. The impact to public safety personnel will be significant and will be realized during the year," MacDonald Lone Tree said. "The chapters wanted the money, which is a great need. In the end, how do we make up the lost positions?"

"We need to have the president make public safety a priority," MacDonald Lone Tree added. "He hasn't given an increase in budget for years and hasn't addressed the shortfalls of public safety."

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