



## Navajo Nation: Covid-19 positive cases increase by 160 as Navajo Area IHS reports 3,900 Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine doses arrive

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** December 15, 2020

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. —** The Navajo Nation’s update to the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic situation report from the Health Command Operations Center (HCOC) for December 15, 2020 included data for testing, results, recoveries and mortalities related to Covid-19 in and around the Navajo Nation.

160 new confirmed cases of Covid-19 were reported on Tuesday bringing the total confirmed positive cases on the Navajo Nation to 19,929. The total number of mortalities related to Covid-19 increased by 5 within the 24-hour period, a total of 727 reported deaths since March. The report included 10,726 recovered cases. A total 185,366 Covid-19 tests have been administered with 152,173 tests that were returned with negative results.

“The country is 10 days from the Christmas holiday, which means many people will be tempted to gather together with people they do not live with,” said Speaker Seth Damon (Bááhaaljí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Red Rock, Rock Springs, Tséyatoh). “Do not travel unless absolutely necessary and always wear a face covering in public spaces in addition to maintaining social distancing guidelines. Along with frequent handwashing for at least 20 seconds, following these guidelines will help in reducing the harm caused by the further spread of the coronavirus.”

3,900 doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine were delivered to the Navajo Nation through the Indian Health Service (IHS) since Monday, reported Navajo Area IHS Director Roselyn Tso Tuesday evening. Following the Navajo Nation Covid-19 Update Town Hall hosted by Council Delegate Mark Freeland (Becenti, Lake Valley, Náhodishgish, Standing Rock, Whiterock, Huerfano, Nageezi, Crownpoint), Director Tso met telephonically with members of the 24th Navajo Nation Council to provide the latest updates regarding the vaccine’s distribution in Navajo facilities.

“Yesterday morning, we had the first vaccine that was delivered to Gallup Indian Medical Center for the Navajo Nation,” said Tso. “We are very pleased to be part of the distribution and also ensuring the Navajo Nation received this distribution the same time as all of the major hospitals in the big cities.”

As of Tuesday afternoon, NAIHS completed its final delivery of the first shipment of vaccines to the Tuba City Regional Health Care Corporation and the Kayenta Health Center. Facilities in the Utah portion of the Navajo Nation opted to receive their vaccine shipments through the Utah Department of Health.

Navajo health care facilities began administering the vaccine to health care workers, including those with direct and non-direct contact, traditional healers, and emergency medical service personnel. The initial tier of the vaccine priority distribution plan also includes residents and staff of tribal long-term care facilities. Tso also reported healthcare providers are receiving the vaccine on a rotating basis to minimize potential staffing shortages if side effects linger.

“We are starting to see that light at the end of that tunnel and we need to continue to hold our defenses up. Until then, that means continue to practice mitigation, social distancing, wearing our masks, washing our hands—doing the things we’ve been doing for the last nine months,” said Freeland.

“I have sisters working in Crownpoint and when they got their shot today, they texted me and they were pretty relieved,” said Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale,

Smith Lake, Thoreau). “It has caused a lot of stress among us, the elders and even the young kids, and we just need to hang tight and be strong. We’ll continue in our prayers for strength and protection.”

Speaker Damon stated: “When it comes to medical staffing in our Navajo Nation healthcare facilities, Navajo leaders continue to support the call for volunteers, US Public Health Service medical officers and other medical professionals from across the country. We welcome Major General John King and the team of 24 medical staff from the Department of Defense to the Navajo Nation, and we will continue to pursue more resources that are an important part of this next stage of this pandemic.”

Tuesday evening, a majority of Council delegates endorsed a petition for a special session of the Navajo Nation Council for Friday, December 18, at 10:00 a.m. The agenda is expected to include Legislation No. 0309-20, sponsored by Speaker Damon, which proposes Sihasin Fund allocations of \$11,924,571 to the Division of Community Development for the Chapter Heavy Equipment Expenditure Plan and \$33,876,114 to the Department of Water Resources for the Emergency Projects Expenditure Plan. The legislation, which was approved Tuesday by the Budget and Finance Committee, is intended to address ongoing needs in local Navajo communities based on information gathered from the CARES Act project funding process. The projects previously did not meet the deadline requirements for CARES funding.

## **More Data**

### **Navajo Nation Covid-19 Cases by Service Unit:**

Chinle Service Unit:	3,850
Gallup Service Unit:	3,288
Shiprock Service Unit:	3,294
Crownpoint Service Unit:	2,114
Ft. Defiance Service Unit:	2,130
Kayenta Service Unit:	1,951
Tuba City Service Unit:	2,072
Winslow Service Unit:	1,209
Bordertowns:	5,536

48 chapters reported positive cases with the communities of heightened concern being: Tuba City (14), Shiprock (11), Ganado (9), Rough Rock (9), Chinle (8), St Michaels (8), Upper Fruitland (8), Lechee (7), Bodaway Gap (6) and Churchrock (5).

The NDOH and the Navajo Epidemiology Center provided the updated Covid-19 figures in coordination with tribally-controlled Public Law 19-638 healthcare facilities and the Navajo Area Indian Health Service. More information, including Covid-19 testing locations, can be found on the Navajo Nation’s Covid-19 website at: <https://www.ndoh.navajo-nsn.gov/COVID-19>.

The Office of Environmental Health and Protection, with the concurrence of the Navajo Department of Health (NDOH) and the HCOC, issued Public Health Emergency Order No. 2020-031. The order continues the Stay at Home (Shelter in Place) Lockdown Order for three weeks, including full 57-hour weekend lockdowns.

The HCOC General Hotline can be reached at (928) 871-7014. Inquiries and requests may be sent to [NNHCOCPlans@navajo-nsn.gov](mailto:NNHCOCPlans@navajo-nsn.gov). The HCOC hours of operation are Monday-Friday from 8am to 5pm, Saturday from 8am to 12pm and Sunday on standby status.

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