



Navajo Nation: Covid-19 positive cases increase by 159, Navajo leaders receive vaccination updates from NAIHS

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PHOTO: A road sign painted by community members states: “Stay Home Protect Our Elders.” The sign was put up over the summer in the community of Leupp along Navajo Route 15 towards Flagstaff.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — The Navajo Nation’s update to coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic situation report from the Health Command Operations Center (HCOC) for December 8, 2020 included data for testing, results, recoveries and mortalities related to Covid-19 in and around the Navajo Nation.

The increase of 159 new cases with two cases in delayed reporting brings the total confirmed positive cases on the Navajo Nation to 18,324. The total number of mortalities related to Covid-19 on the Navajo Nation increased by 6, totaling 688 reported deaths since March. The report included 10,075 recovered cases, an increase of 30 recoveries since yesterday. A total 175,072 Covid-19 tests have been administered with 144,759 tests that were returned with negative results.

“We continue to express the importance of protecting your home and family from the spread of Covid-19. The Navajo Nation’s cases of Covid-19 will unfortunately get worse before it gets better, and we’re hearing from our healthcare and law enforcement personnel that the situation is escalating. We need the Navajo people, and those who choose to come to the Navajo Nation, to know that every single person is responsible for the overall safety of our communities,” said Speaker Seth Damon.

The Navajo Area Indian Health Service (NAIHS), in coordination with the Navajo Nation Department of Health (NDOH), is currently preparing a four-tiered vaccination plan that will prioritize who receives the vaccine during the initial rounds of vaccine availability. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

(CDC) continues to state demand for Covid-19 vaccine is expected to exceed supply during the first months of the national vaccination program.

Health, Education, and Human Services Committee Chairman Daniel Tso stated: “Today, we heard from the Navajo Area Indian Health Service that the two vaccines expected to come to the Navajo Nation will not contain the actual virus that causes Covid19, but instead contains instructions for helping build the body’s immunity to the virus. As Navajo leaders, we continue to receive important details about these vaccines that will help more people make the best choice for them when it comes to moving beyond Covid-19. Though a vaccine has not yet been approved by the federal government, we are confident an announcement will be made soon granting distribution.”

Dr. Laura Hammitt told Navajo leaders Tuesday afternoon that current versions of vaccines undergoing trials across the country are mRNA-type vaccines showing a high degree of efficacy. Data on side-effects are reported to be similar to new shingles vaccines where low-grade fevers, fatigue, muscle aches, headache and arm soreness may be experienced on a temporary, short-term basis.

The NAIHS, NDOH and Navajo leaders will continue working together to plan for cold-storage requirements associated with vaccines undergoing trial and review by the federal government. Both vaccines that are likely to come to the Navajo Nation require administration within 5 days of arrival and require two doses approximately three to four weeks apart. More information will be made available as the federal government announces the approval of the vaccines for distribution, expected shortly.

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 an additional three weeks, including full 57-hour weekend lockdowns.

The NDOH and the Navajo Epidemiology Center provided the updated Covid-19 figures in coordination with tribally-controlled 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 HCOC General Hotline can be reached at (928) 871-7014. Inquiries and requests may be sent to 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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