



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE;**

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**Operation Storm Surge in effect on Navajo Nation  
Volunteers Needed**

CHINLE, AZ – Operation Storm Surge 2013 has been in effect on the Navajo Nation due to flooding caused by heavy rain in the Central Agency area. Arizona communities impacted include Chinle, Many Farms, Rock Point, Tselani/Cottonwood, Dennehotso, and Tonalea. Other regions of the Navajo Nation may be at risk with more flash flood warnings expected into the weekend.

There are approximately 50 to 80 homes within the flash flood areas and many families are out of their homes. The Navajo Nation opened a shelter in Chinle with the help of the American Red Cross Grand Canyon Chapter. Red Cross volunteers will provide meals, snacks, bottled water and coffee, as well as cots and blankets to flooding victims, however, more volunteers are needed in these communities. Navajo families with children are sleeping outside due to mud, rain, mold and infestation. Volunteers can contact the Navajo Nation Department of Emergency Management EMERGENCY OPERATION CENTER at the following numbers: 505-371-8415, 505-371-8416, 505-371-8417.

Navajo Nation officials caution residents to be aware of floods and flooded roadways. Observe road closures and follow orders of local law enforcement personnel on scene. "This is for everyone's safety," Erny Zah states from the Office of the President and Vice President. Even if you feel you live in a community with a low risk of flooding, remember that anywhere it rains, it can flood. Just because you haven't experienced a flood in the past, doesn't mean you won't in the future.

In addition to the flash flood warnings, the Navajo Division of Health cautions people to be aware of mosquitoes after the rain storms. West Nile Virus (WNV) causes an infection that is spread by mosquitoes. WNV infections generally occur during warm weather months when mosquitoes are active. Puddles or open water allow for mosquitoes to breed in standing water. Mosquitoes spread the virus when they bite people or other animals, such as horses. For prevention, use mosquito repellent and wear long-sleeved shirts and pants when outdoors.

**Navajo residents should pay particular attention to water crossings and areas of heavy water flow including the following tips from [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov):**

- Listen to the radio or television for information.
- Be aware that flash flooding can occur. If there is any possibility of a flash flood, move immediately to higher ground. Do not wait for instructions to move.
- Be aware of stream, drainage channels, canyons and other areas known to flood suddenly. Flash floods can occur in these areas with or without typical warnings such as rain clouds or heavy rain.
- Do not walk through moving water. Six inches of moving water can make you fall. If you have to walk in water, walk where the water is not moving. Use a stick to check the firmness of the ground in front of you.
- Do not drive into flooded areas. If floodwaters rise around your car, abandon the car and move to higher ground if you can do so safely. You and the vehicle can be swept away quickly.

- Do not camp or park your vehicle along streams, rivers or creeks, particularly during threatening conditions.

**Although floodwaters may be down in some areas, many dangers still exist. Here are some things to remember in the days ahead:**

- Use local alerts and warning systems to get information and expert informed advice as soon as available.
  - Avoid moving water.
  - Stay away from damaged areas unless your assistance has been specifically requested by police, fire, or relief organization.
  - Emergency workers will be assisting people in flooded areas. You can help them by staying off the roads and out of the way.
  - Play it safe. Additional flooding or flash floods can occur. Listen for local warnings and information. If your car stalls in rapidly rising waters, get out immediately and climb to higher ground.
  - Return home only when authorities indicate it is safe.
  - Roads may still be closed because they have been damaged or are covered by water. Barricades have been placed for your protection. If you come upon a barricade or a flooded road, go another way.
  - If you must walk or drive in areas that have been flooded. Stay on firm ground. Moving water only 6 inches deep can sweep you off your feet. Standing water may be electrically charged from underground or downed power lines.
- Flooding may have caused familiar places to change. Floodwaters often erode roads and walkways. Flood debris may hide animals and broken bottles, and it's also slippery. Avoid walking or driving through it.
- Be aware of areas where floodwaters have receded. Roads may have weakened and could collapse under the weight of a car.
  - Stay out of any building if it is surrounded by floodwaters.
  - Use extreme caution when entering buildings; there may be hidden damage, particularly in foundations.

**A flood can cause physical hazards and emotional stress. You need to look after yourself and your family as you focus on cleanup and repair.**

- Avoid floodwaters; water may be contaminated by oil, gasoline or raw sewage.
- Service damaged septic tanks, cesspools, pits and leaching systems as soon as possible. Damaged sewer systems are serious health hazards.
- Listen for news reports to learn whether the community's water supply is safe to drink
- Clean and disinfect everything that got wet. Mud left from floodwaters can contain sewage and chemicals.
- Rest often and eat well.
- Keep a manageable schedule. Make a list and do jobs one at a time.
- Discuss your concerns with others and seek help. Contact Red Cross for information on emotional support available in your area.

For prevention of West Nile Virus, use mosquito repellent and wear long-sleeved shirts and pants when you go outdoors in flooded areas.

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