



The Navajo Nation
Office of the President and Vice President

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 13, 2020

**Nez-Lizer Administration issues guidelines and plan
to carefully reopen the Navajo Nation with phased-in approach**

“This will not be a rushed reopening. We spent many weeks working together with the health care experts and many others to develop the phased-in reopening plan.”

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer present the “Navajo Nation Reopening Plan,” which will serve as a guide to safely and gradually reopen business on the Navajo Nation during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Plan includes safety-guidelines for Navajo Nation residents to follow through the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic, directs places of business to implement COVID-19 policies and procedures meeting certain standards, and provides a color-coded system for progressively reopening business on the Navajo Nation based on data-driven analysis and input from health experts.

“This will not be a rushed reopening. We spent many weeks working together with the health care experts and many others to develop the phased-in reopening plan. The first case of COVID-19 in the Navajo Nation was confirmed on March 17, and that is the day we faced an invisible monster like we never dealt with before. Since that day, we have combated the virus together, and it has made us stronger and more resilient. In May, we saw the highest number of positive cases and now we are seeing a consistent flattening of the curve. We have had 48 consecutive days with less than 100 reported daily cases of COVID-19, and 13 consecutive days under 50 daily cases. We commend and thank our Navajo people for listening to our health care experts, law enforcement, leaders, and others. Our frontline workers, such as firefighters, EMTs, police officers, doctors, nurses, grocery store workers, and custodians, were working around the clock saving lives. Together, we helped each other through our way of life teachings to flatten the curve,” said President Nez.

According to the data, wearing masks, social distancing, washing hands, staying home, and being mindful of one’s surroundings has helped to flatten the curve on a consistent basis, he added.

“Through contact tracing we are learning more about the movement of the virus and we know that the fight is not over, but we have to find new ways to move forward. We cannot rush to reopen the Nation. We must reopen slowly and cautiously, and most importantly, rely on the data

and advice of our health care experts. When states reopened in May, we saw how quickly the coronavirus can re-emerge and spread and that's what we want to avoid," President Nez added.

In regards to the new school year, President Nez and Vice President Lizer publicly stated on July 31 that they support and recommend implementing a virtual learning platform at schools, as opposed to in-person classroom instruction for the safety of students and teachers.

The Navajo Nation Board of Education passed resolution NNBEAU-658-2020, approving and recommending that all Navajo Nation schools provide virtual or online options. In addition, the Department of Diné Education conducted two surveys, one for parents and one for school principals, regarding options for the upcoming school year. According to the Department of Diné Education, preliminary results indicate that an overwhelming majority of parents support virtual/online learning for the safety of their children.

On Monday, President Nez spoke with U.S. Asst. Secretary of Indian Affairs Tara Sweeney and Bureau of Indian Education Director Tony Dearman and informed them that he does not support the reopening of BIE schools for in-person learning for the current semester.

"There is a possibility that parents may choose to move their children out of BIE schools if they feel that BIE schools are unsafe and enroll them in other schools that offer online classes. If the number of enrolled students goes down within BIE schools, that may provide the federal government with justification to cut funding for BIE schools, which would be very disappointing and unfortunate – we hope this is not their intention. BIE Acting Associate Deputy Director Charles Sherman assured us that they respect the sovereignty of the Navajo Nation and will proceed with online classes," said President Nez, adding that state schools are also supportive of online learning.

Since March, the Nez-Lizer Administration has focused on flattening the curve, protecting the most vulnerable residents, and ensuring access to testing, essential items, and hospital capacity.

The Navajo Nation Reopening Plan prioritizes elders and individuals that are at higher-risk for severe illness. It ensures the Nation's healthcare system is responsive to increases in admissions and responds to future crises and any resurgences while allowing a phased path to recovery.

Per the Plan's directives, all places of business on the Navajo Nation must develop policies and procedures to ensure physical distancing between personnel and customers, provide special accommodations for staff who are members of a vulnerable population, provide sufficient and appropriate personal protective equipment for personnel, carry sufficient disinfectant products, require hygiene practices and cleaning of frequently-touched surfaces, provide regular COVID-19 screening, provide COVID-19 training, and have in place plans to respond to suspected and confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the workplace.

Additionally, places of business on the Nation are directed to implement certain measures in their policies and procedures designed to further reduce the risks of COVID-19 exposure and spread, such as increasing facility ventilation, frequent screening and testing for employees, installing

physical barriers, implementing flexible work schedules, and providing employees with flexible leave policies.

Business on the Nation will reopen progressively, in accordance with a color-coded status schedule, each color in the schedule representing a different level of reopening activity. The statuses include red (high restrictions), orange (moderate-high restrictions), yellow (moderate-low restrictions), and green (low restrictions). Public health data trends will drive the determination of the Nation's status.

Depending on data trends, the Nation may move from a less-restrictive to a more-restrictive status and vice versa. The Navajo Nation Health Command Operations Center is responsible for declaring the Nation's status at any given time, and will do so by public health order. The decision to move between reopening statuses will depend on the rate of new cases of hospital service units, general hospital capacities, COVID-19 testing availability, and availability of contact tracing and case management resources.

The Health Command Operations Center has issued its first public health order declaring the Nation to be in Orange status. In addition, the order states that all businesses shall be bound to the conditions and requirements of Orange status.

The Navajo Nation Executive Branch has also created the "Navajo Nation COVID-19 Worksite Safety Guidelines," specifically for its Divisions and Departments to follow as administrative leave of non-essential Executive Branch employees comes to an end on Aug. 16, and as Divisions and Departments resume and revitalize services that have been reduced or placed on hold during administrative leave. Divisions and Departments have been directed to utilize the recommendations of the Executive Branch Guidelines—e.g. provide personnel with sufficient and appropriate PPE and disinfectant products, create alternative work schedules, etc.—in crafting their plans to resume and revitalize services. The Executive Branch Guidelines can be found [here](#).

"Until a safe treatment or vaccine for COVID-19 is available, we will have to continue to adapt to the risks associated with the coronavirus. We each have a collective responsibility to ensure that reopening the Navajo Nation proceeds smoothly and safely. We all have to follow public health guidelines and use our best judgment to protect ourselves, our relatives and neighbors, and vulnerable individuals. Key public health metrics will determine if and when it is appropriate to proceed through reopening phases," said Vice President Lizer.

"As we move forward with reopening the Navajo Nation, we have to stay vigilant. We have to continue to practice preventative measures, such as social distancing, washing our hands, cleaning and disinfecting high-touched surfaces, and wearing our face masks. These basic precautions will limit the spread of COVID-19 and facilitate reopening safely," said Department of Health Executive Director Dr. Jill Jim.

For more information on the "Navajo Nation Reopening Plan," please visit: <https://www.navajoreopening.navajo-nsn.gov>

For more information on the “Navajo Nation COVID-19 Worksite Safety Guidelines,” please visit:
<https://www.navajoreopening.navajo-nsn.gov/NAVAJO-NATION-EXECUTIVE-BRANCH>

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**PUBLIC HEALTH ORDER
NAVAJO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
NAVAJO OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & PROTECTION PROGRAM**

August 13, 2020

Public Health Emergency Order No. 2020-020

**Public Health Emergency Order Implementing the Navajo Nation Reopening Plan and
Declaring “Orange Status”**

- I. Paragraphs I – IX from Public Health Emergency Order No. 2020-004 are incorporated herein, addressing the various Navajo Nation (Nation) authorities related to the current COVID-19 Public Health Emergency as well as escalating incidents and community spread of COVID-19 on the Nation.
- II. In response to COVID-19, the Navajo Nation has imposed closure of non-essential business, ordered weekend curfews, and taken other measures to slow the spread of the virus and in the best interests of our People. As the Nation has been able to control spread of the virus through these measures, and as the Nation's hospitals have regained capacity to handle cases, the Nation will be transitioning back to greater business activity on a gradual basis. To this end, the Navajo Nation has drafted the Navajo Nation Reopening Plan (“Plan”) attached hereto. The Plan, among other things, provides a color-coded “reopening status schedule,” which will guide reopening of businesses in a safe manner. The Plan is adopted as part of this Order, and thus will be binding on all businesses on the Navajo Nation. Business leaders should therefore familiarize themselves with the Plan and understand how it will affect them.
- III. The intent of this order is to establish the “Navajo Nation Reopening Plan,” to declare the Nation’s “status” according thereto, and to guide businesses in proper compliance with the plan. All provisions of this Order are to be interpreted to effectuate this intent. Failure to comply with any provision of this Order constitutes an imminent threat and menace to public health.

THEREFORE, NOTICE IS GIVEN that pursuant the power and authority set forth in the NDOH enabling legislation (NNC Resolution No. CO-50-14) and in conjunction with the Navajo Nation Public Health State of Emergency Declaration (CEM Resolution No. 20-03-11):

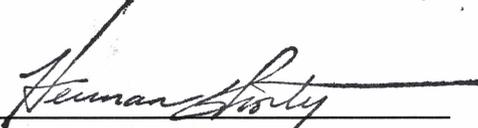
- A. The Navajo Nation Reopening Plan (attached hereto) is declared binding on all businesses on the Navajo Nation. The Plan may be amended in a future order.

- B. Per the Plan's "reopening status schedule," the Navajo Health Command and Operations Center ("NHCOC"), having evaluated the current state of the Navajo Nation per the gating criteria and public health considerations provided in the Plan, declares the Nation to be in Orange status. All businesses shall be bound to the conditions and requirements of Orange status. The NHCOC will announce any future status changes by Public Health Emergency Order.

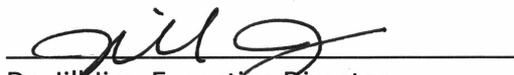
NOTICE IS FURTHER GIVEN that this Order shall not abrogate any disease-reporting requirements (consistent with HIPAA privacy standards).

NOTICE IS FURTHER GIVEN that this Order shall take effect Monday, August 17, 2020 at 5:00 A.M. MDT, and shall remain in effect until amended or rescinded by the Health Command Center.

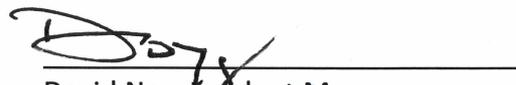
ADDITIONAL ADVISORIES AND ORDERS WILL FOLLOW AS CONDITIONS WARRANT. SO ORDERED THIS 13th DAY OF AUGUST, 2020.



Herman Shorty, Program Supervisor III
Navajo Office of Environmental Health &
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Dr. Jill Jim, Executive Director
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Definitions

Orange status: 25% of maximum occupancy allowed for most businesses. Dining or waiting establishments: allowed drive-thru only (food, banks, financial institutions). Barber shops/Hair Salons: Appointment only and allow time for cleaning between appointment. Marinas and parks: Adhere to strict compliance for places of businesses and appointment only. Not Allowed in Orange Phase: Youth Programs, Casinos and video poker, museums, flea markets, roadside markets, gyms, recreation facilities, movie theaters.