



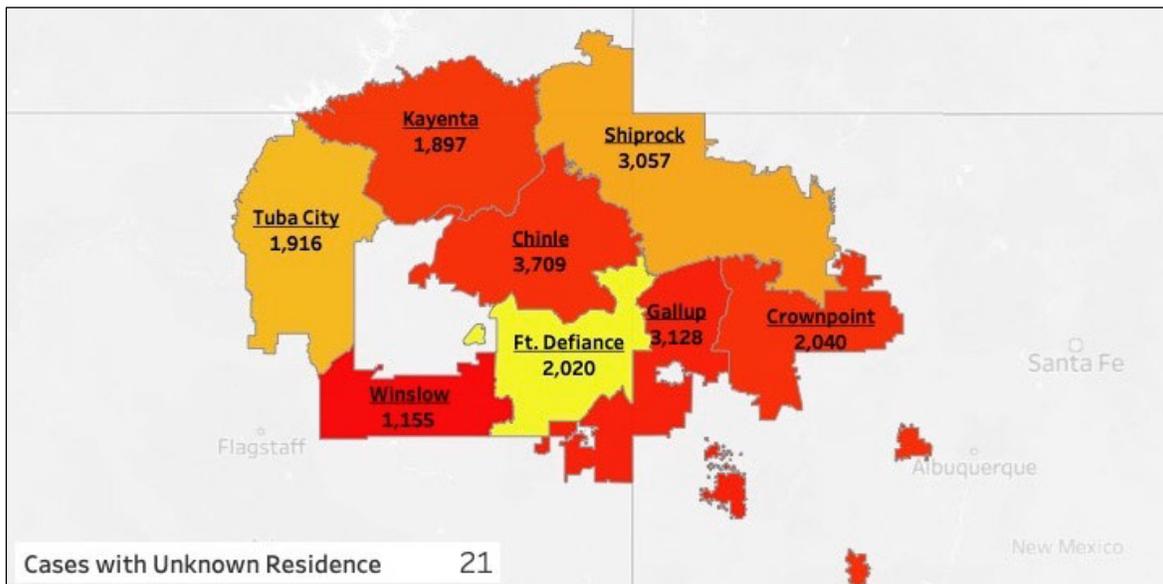
The Navajo Nation
Office of the President and Vice President

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347 new cases, 10,256 recoveries, and six more deaths related to COVID-19 as FDA advisory committee recommends approval of vaccine



WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – On Thursday, the Navajo Department of Health, in coordination with the Navajo Epidemiology Center and the Navajo Area Indian Health Service, reported 347 new COVID-19 positive cases for the Navajo Nation and six more deaths. The total number of deaths is now 699 as of Thursday. Reports indicate that 10,256 individuals have recovered from COVID-19, and 178,801 COVID-19 tests have been administered. The total number of positive COVID-19 cases is now 18,943, including 21 delayed reported cases.

Navajo Nation COVID-19 positive cases by Service Unit:

- Chinle Service Unit: 3,709
- Crownpoint Service Unit: 2,040
- Ft. Defiance Service Unit: 2,020
- Gallup Service Unit: 3,128
- Kayenta Service Unit: 1,897
- Shiprock Service Unit: 3,057
- Tuba City Service Unit: 1,916
- Winslow Service Unit: 1,155

* 21 residences with COVID-19 positive cases are not specific enough to place them accurately in a Service Unit. On Thursday, the state of Utah reported 3,401 cases, Arizona reported 4,928 new cases, and New Mexico reported 1,791.

On Thursday, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's advisory committee recommended the authorization of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for COVID-19, which would allow for the distribution of the vaccine based on the Centers for Disease Control's phased distribution plan that calls for health care workers and those living in long-term assisted living facilities to receive the vaccine first on a volunteer basis. Final FDA approval is pending.

Earlier this year, the Navajo Nation Human Research Review Board, the National Indian Health Service IRB, and the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health IRB approved the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine clinical trial. As of Dec. 8, over 43,000 people have volunteered for the Pfizer vaccine trials worldwide, including members of the Navajo Nation and the White Mountain Apache Tribe. Moderna is also seeking approval from the FDA for its COVID-19 vaccine, which has also shown 94.5-percent effectiveness. Navajo Area IHS is developing plans for the distribution of the vaccines on the Navajo Nation, if or when the vaccines are approved by the FDA.

"Once the FDA gives final approval for the Pfizer vaccine, the distribution process will begin and we expect the vaccine to reach the Navajo Nation next week. Again, in accordance with the CDC recommendations, the first doses of the vaccine will be given to health care workers and those living in long-term assisted living facilities on a voluntary basis. This will be a challenging process, but our health care experts are doing the very best they can while they also continue to work around the clock to fight for all of us on the frontlines. With 347 new cases reported today, we are likely seeing the impact from the Thanksgiving Day holiday. As we approach the Christmas holiday, we have to do more to hold ourselves accountable and to inform our loved ones about the risks of in-person gatherings. Please continue to stay home as much as possible during the current three-week lockdown," said Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez.

The Nez-Lizer Administration will be joined by Navajo Department of Health Executive Director Dr. Jill Jim, Chief Medical Officer for Navajo Area Indian Health Service Dr. Loretta Christensen, Dr. Laura Hammitt with John Hopkins University, and other public health experts to provide important updates about the Pfizer vaccine, during a live virtual town hall on Thursday, Dec. 10 at 6:00 p.m. (MST) on the Nez-Lizer Facebook page and later aired on local radio stations in English and Navajo. The Nez-Lizer Administration and Miss Navajo Nation Shaandiin Parrish distributed food packages to frontline health care workers at the Indian Health Service facility in Crownpoint, N.M. in appreciation of their hard work and to help keep them safe during the pandemic.

"As the vaccine process progresses, we will do our best to inform the public and to provide information on a consistent basis, but we also need the help of our Navajo people to inform your loved ones as well. We are going to use many forms of communication in English and Navajo, but we also need all of our people to help inform your parents, siblings, grandparents, and others in a safe manner. Please remember our Navajo people, first responders, and our leaders in your prayers," said Vice President Myron Lizer.

For more information, including helpful prevention tips, and resources to help stop the spread of COVID-19, visit the Navajo Department of Health's COVID-19 website: <http://www.ndoh.navajo-nsn.gov/COVID-19>. For COVID-19 related questions and information, call (928) 871-7014.

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