



The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

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Navajo Area IHS completes distribution of first allocation of Pfizer vaccines to health care centers

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – On Tuesday, the Navajo Area Indian Health Service completed the delivery and distribution of its first allocation of 3,900 Pfizer vaccines for COVID-19 have been delivered to all health care facilities, including health care clinics on the Navajo Nation. The Navajo Nation opted to have the Navajo Area IHS oversee the distribution of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, with the exception of the Utah Navajo Health System, which opted to work with the state of Utah for distribution. The Utah Navajo Health System reported that the vaccines will be delivered later this month, in accordance with its agreement with the state.



PHOTO: Chinle Health Care Facility X-ray Technologist Orrin P. Bluehouse was one of several frontline health care workers who received the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine at the health care center in Chinle, Ariz. on Dec. 15, 2020.

Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez visited the Chinle Health Care Facility and met with key public health officials, including those on the frontlines helping COVID-19 patients, as the facility received more doses of the Pfizer vaccine. Health officials reported that they began the process of administering the vaccine to health care workers on Monday. More vaccines were also delivered to Northern Navajo Medical Center in Shiprock, N.M., Kayenta Health Care Center, Tuba City Regional Health Care Center, and several other smaller health care facilities.

“The arrival of the Pfizer vaccine is a blessing for all of our people, including the doctors, nurses, and many other health care warriors who are helping and treating all of our people who come in with COVID-19 symptoms and those who are fighting for their lives. We are complying with the advice and recommendations of the public health experts, the CDC, when it comes to how the vaccine is being distributed and administered. I truly appreciate all of the health care workers who are dedicating themselves to fight COVID-19 and save lives,” said President Nez.

President Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer also hosted an online town hall as they were joined by Major General John F. King, who is the Commander of Contingency Command Post 1 and Task Force 51 for U.S. Army North, Chinle Health Care Facility's Chief Medical Officer Dr. Eric Ritchie, Director of Public Health Dr. Jill Moses, and Internal Medicine Specialist Dr. Puthiery Va.

Native Medicine Coordinator Roland Begay, who was the very first health care worker at the facility to receive the Pfizer vaccine on Monday. He spoke about the lessons we have learned since the start of the pandemic and encouraged everyone to evaluate their priorities before deciding whether or not to get the vaccine and to continue keeping their guard up.

"It was an opportunity when I was asked the question – was I willing to and what I thought about it. I said well, it's been in the plan, people talk about it globally, and I said it's here. What are we going to do, just look at it? That's what it's for, to save lives. People should ask themselves what their priorities are," said Begay. "Just because this vaccine is here doesn't mean we stop and put our masks away. Nine months ago, we weren't ready, but as time moved on, we learned and adapted. The choice is yours and it's in your hands.



PHOTO: Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez observes health care professional preparing Pfizer vaccines for use at the Chinle Health Care Facility in Chinle, Ariz. on Dec. 15, 2020.

President Nez and Miss Navajo Nation Shaandiin Parrish also thanked the health care workers and encouraged them to continue their good work to help save more lives. They also witnessed several health care workers receiving the first dose of the Pfizer vaccine including Chinle Health Care Facility X-ray Technologist Orrin P. Bluehouse, a member of the Navajo Nation, who works daily with COVID-19 positive patients.

During a brief meeting with Navajo Area IHS Director Roselyn Tso and Major General John F. King, President Nez thanked all of the federal officials for their hard work and dedication throughout the pandemic. Director Tso also commended the Navajo Area Indian Health Service employees and spoke about the importance of the vaccine for all health care workers and expressed her condolences for the families that have lost loved ones to COVID-19. Navajo Area IHS officials expect all health care workers to be vaccinated by Sunday.

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