



The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

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New COVID-19 surge projections show the effectiveness of Public Health Emergency Orders and weekend lockdowns

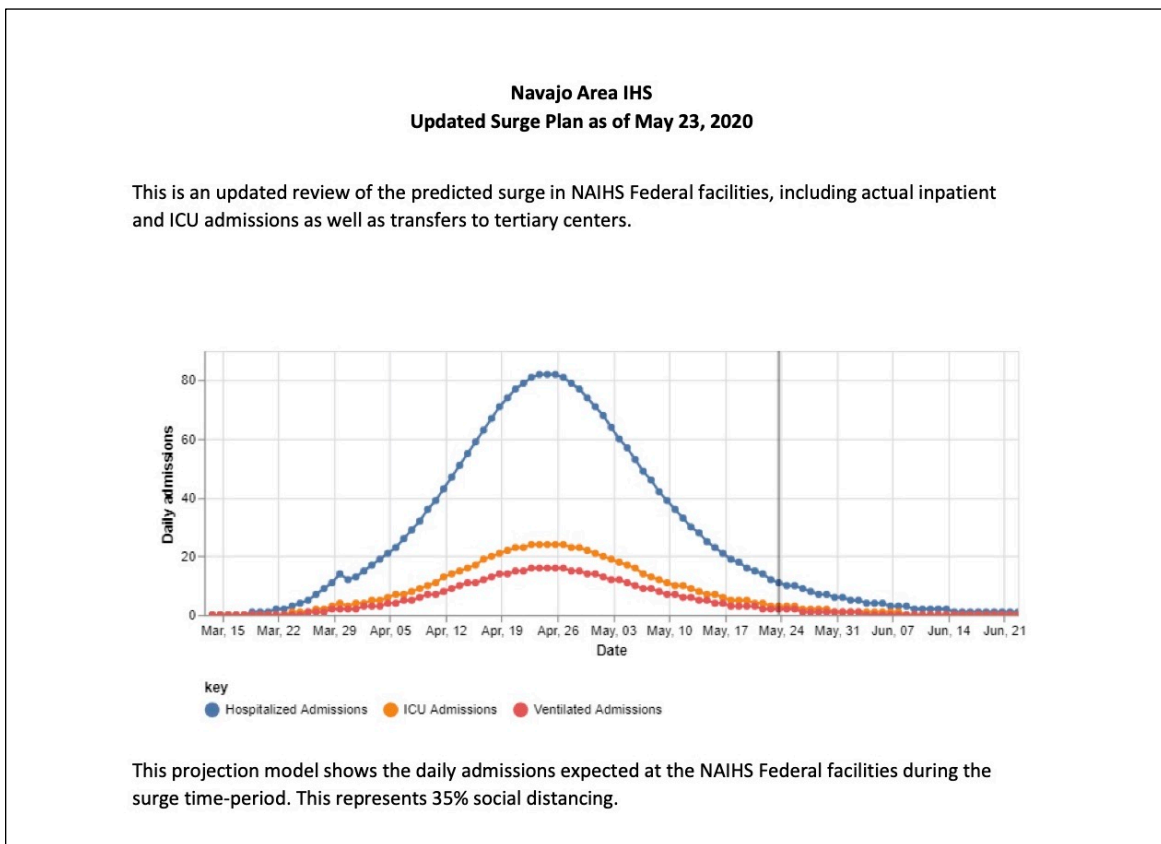


PHOTO: Updated surge projections provided by the Navajo Area IHS dated May 23, 2020.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – During a live online town hall on Tuesday, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer announced that recent data and new surge projections provided by the Navajo Area Indian Health Service on May 24, indicate that the COVID-19 surge peak for IHS hospitalizations, including ICU admissions and ventilations occurred from April 21 to April 26 – an entire month earlier than initial surge projections on March 27.

Well in advance of the first confirmed case of COVID-19 on the Navajo Nation, the Nez-Lizer Administration took unprecedented proactive measures to prevent and mitigate the spread of the virus by issuing public warnings dating back to January, issuing travel advisories and restrictions for employees and citizens, implementing stay-at-home orders, and daily and weekend curfews. Combined with radio and online town halls, the effort to reduce the impact of COVID-19 is showing early signs of success.

“Everything that we have implemented has been data-driven and based on the advice and recommendations from health care and medical experts. It’s been effective and it is working to flatten the curve in certain areas and we are working hard to make sure the daily numbers begin to decrease consistently. Nearly two months before the virus reached our Nation, we issued public messages to caution our people and to make them aware. The new projections have very good implications, but now is not the time to let up. We have to continue wearing masks in public, practicing social distancing, and complying with the stay-at-home order and daily curfew. New data from other states show that relaxing curfews and stay-at-home orders are having serious consequences. In some areas, when states have reopened, their numbers of new cases increased. We must remain diligent and prepared,” said President Nez.

The initial surge projections showed that the Navajo Nation’s COVID-19 surge peak would begin on the week of May 24, with 30-percent effect of practicing social distancing and staying home. The latest surge projection update indicates that the Navajo Nation achieved 35-percent social distancing, and complied at a high rate with curfews and stay-at-home orders. As a result, the Navajo Nation passed the COVID-19 surge peak in late April, much sooner than initially projected.

IHS Director RADM Michael D. Weahkee and Navajo Area IHS Director Roselyn Tso also participated in the town hall to provide updates on Personal Protective Equipment, testing, and other matters. RADM Weahkee also thanked the Navajo people and leaders for everything they have done to help flatten the curve, including implementing public health orders and curfews.

“That’s attributable to all the great actions of you all, the citizens as well as the leadership of the Navajo Nation,” said RADM Weahkee.

“Our administration took decisive actions to ensure the safety of our Navajo people and our communities. We issued travel restrictions, reduced the operation of Navajo governments, closed schools, required masks to be worn, and issued orders to stay home and save lives. These were drastic measures we had to take. The updated surge report shows us that the anticipated numbers of Navajo people needing hospitalization, including intensive care and ventilation, did not materialize according to the first surge report that was generated,” President Nez said.

“I am very pleased to see that the COVID-19 surge peak passed last month. Navajo people have done a tremendous job in answering our call to protect our elders. To stay home, stay safe, and save lives. Social distancing and obeying curfew orders work. The updated surge report shows us that we did a good job. Yes, our numbers are increasing due to increasing testing and improvements in testing result turnaround time. We are seeing that some states are opening up in phases and some places are experiencing spikes with new COVID-19 cases, and we are hearing about potential second and third waves of infection. For Navajo people this tells us that we are not out of the woods yet. We must keep up our fight against COVID-19,” Vice President Lizer said.

The Nez-Lizer Administration thanks the front-line warriors who are helping the Nation to win the fight against COVID-19. The work that contributed to the positive surge projection could not have been achieved without our police officers, emergency personnel, and our Navajo Nation employees who have answered the call to help our Navajo people.

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