



The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 25, 2020

Health and medical experts urge Navajo Nation residents to remain vigilant as COVID-19 community outbreaks increase

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer, in coordination with the Navajo Department of Health and Navajo Area Indian Health Service, report that critical COVID-19 outbreaks are occurring within the Sage Memorial Hospital service area in Arizona and within satellite chapters in the Eastern Navajo Agency in New Mexico. Within two days, the Nation reported 70 new COVID-19 cases, which is a significant increase from last week.

The Navajo Epidemiology Center reported that the outbreaks are related to traveling off the Navajo Nation, and family gatherings where public health orders requiring social distancing and wearing face masks were not adhered to. For the Navajo Nation's overall data, nearly half of the reported cases are in people age 20-49, and 64-percent of fatalities are people 60 years of age and over.

"Everyone needs to remember that we will not have a consistent decline in coronavirus cases until there is a safe vaccine available. Until then, we need to stay alert, prepared, and safe. The data and the facts show that anyone can get infected and exposed to COVID-19 and that the virus affects elders and people with underlying health conditions more so. Together, our priority as a Nation is to avoid another spike in cases like we have seen earlier in the pandemic," said President Nez.

He added that the Navajo Health Command Operations Center is focusing its efforts on controlling and isolating the virus outbreaks. Contact tracers are working to reach all of the individuals who may have been exposed so they can quarantine for 14 days. The case management team has also interviewed people who tested positive to learn more and to monitor their illnesses, and provide isolation resources that they may need to slow and stop the spread.

"Contact tracing and case management are important tactics to stop the spread of the virus. However, individual responsibility is also very important, such as practicing social distancing, wearing a mask, staying home, staying away from large gatherings, avoiding visitors at home, washing your hands, cleaning, and disinfecting high-touch surface areas, and getting tested if you are sick. The more people you interact with the more you increase your risk of becoming infected and spreading the virus," added President Nez.

Health care professionals also continue to urge Navajo residents to avoid hosting and going to large gatherings, such as birthday parties, family and holiday celebrations, flea markets, and in-

person ceremonies and religious services. They strongly advise against traveling off the Navajo Nation as well.

On Thursday, the state of Utah reported 1,198 new cases of COVID-19, the state of Arizona reported 566 new cases, and New Mexico reported 239. To mitigate the spread, the Navajo Nation will have a 57-hour weekend lockdown beginning on Friday, Sept. 25, at 8:00 p.m. until Monday, Sept. 28, at 5:00 a.m. (MDT). The daily curfew will continue from 9:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. on weekdays.

"We see increases in all surrounding states and counties of the Navajo Nation. Restricting individual movement on the Nation prevents family and community outbreaks and minimizes the strain on medical response capabilities. We will overcome this pandemic eventually," said Vice President Lizer.

The Office of the President and Vice President and the Health Command Operations Center will host a live online and radio town hall on the Nez-Lizer Facebook page, KGAK 1330 AM, and KNDN 960 AM on Sunday, Sept. 27 at 1:00 p.m. (MDT), regarding the COVID-19 outbreaks and preventative measures.

For more information, including quarantine and isolation 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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