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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 22, 2020

Navajo Nation re-issues Stay-At-Home Order and 57-hour weekend lockdown due to rising COVID-19 cases within and near the Navajo Nation

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — On Tuesday, with the advice of health care experts the Navajo Nation re-issued a Stay-At-Home Order and stricter daily and weekend lockdown hours due to new reports of increases in COVID-19 cases in the Sage Memorial Hospital service area in Arizona and in satellite chapters in the Eastern Navajo Agency in New Mexico, which are directly related to travel off the Navajo Nation and family gatherings where social distancing and the wearing of face masks were not enforced.

Public Health Emergency Order No. 2020-023 was signed on Tuesday, to re-issue the Stay at Home (Shelter in Place) requirements, starting on Tuesday, Sept. 22, 2020 and ending on Tuesday, Sept. 29, 2020. The order also implements a full 57-hour weekend lockdown beginning at 8:00 p.m. (MDT) on Friday, Sept. 25, 2020 until 5:00 a.m. (MDT) on Monday, Sept. 28, 2020. Additional weekend lockdowns may follow. Daily curfew hours are Monday through Friday from 9:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. (MDT). Gatherings of more than five people are strictly prohibited.

“For the safety and health of all of our Navajo people, we must adhere to the advice and recommendations of our health care experts. Their expertise is what led to the decrease in the new cases over the last few months. It only takes a few new cases to create multiple clusters of positive COVID-19 cases. The latest reports of cluster cases result from individuals who traveled to cities off of the Navajo Nation, returned home with the virus, and spread it to others during family gatherings, despite active public health orders that clearly restrict any in-person gatherings. While these new cases are being investigated, our public health experts and contact tracers have begun to mobilize resources to help identify those who may have been exposed to the virus, to isolate positive cases, and provide food and other essential items to those who are now in isolation,” said Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez.

Surrounding counties and states such as Coconino County and the state of Utah have reported increasing numbers of COVID-19 cases recently, which also increases risks for residents of the Navajo Nation, particularly when residents travel to other “hot spot” areas.

“The increases in new cases is very alarming. We do not yet know the full extent of exposures and infections due to the recent cluster cases, but everyone can do their part to protect themselves and their families. Unfortunately, we will see substantial increases in new COVID-19 cases. Our

health care experts and Health Command Operations Center are moving quickly to identify and contact anyone who might've been exposed to the virus, and to get them the assistance needed to fight the virus and to isolate. We ask all of our Navajo people to continue to pray for our Nation and first responders," said Vice President Myron Lizer.

Public Health Emergency Order No. 2020-023 states, "Individuals may leave their place of residence only for emergencies or to perform "essential activities," which primarily include activities and tasks essential to health, safety, and welfare. All businesses including all stores, gas stations, restaurants, drive-thru food establishments, hay and all other vendors are required to cease operations and close during the partial weekend lockdowns and daily curfew hours.

Individuals are permitted to conduct farming activities and tend to livestock, however livestock owners must plan ahead to purchase hay and feed – hay vendors will not be allowed to sell during the weekend lockdown and daily curfew hours. Residents are also allowed to exercise outdoors within their immediate residential area or home site area during non-curfew hours. Essential Employees reporting to or from duty are exempted from the weekend lockdown, but must carry official identification or a letter of designation from their employer on official letterhead which includes a contact name and number for verification.

To view Public Health Emergency Order No. 2020-023, please click the following link: https://www.opvp.navajo-nsn.gov/Portals/0/FILES/Latest%20News/NDOH%20Public%20Health%20Emergency%20Order%202020-023%20Dikos%20Ntsaaigii-19.pdf

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

September 22, 2020

Public Health Emergency Order No. 2020-023

Re-issuing Stay at Home (Shelter in Place) Order and 57-hour Weekend Lockdown

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. A Stay at Home (Shelter in Place) Order has been in effect for all residents of the Nation, requiring individuals to limit their movement within and outside of their immediate communities and to limit contact with individuals who are not in their immediate household. (Public Health Emergency Orders No. 2020-003 (March 20, 2020) and No. 2020-004 (March 29, 2020)). Under that Order, individuals can leave their place of residence only to perform "Essential Activities" which primarily include activities and tasks essential to health, safety, and welfare. That Order also advised that public gatherings in excess of five (5) people should be avoided. Under Public Health Emergency Order No. 2020-014 ("Safer at Home"), individuals were encouraged to exercise personal responsibility but were not ordered to stay home. That Order also permitted "Drive-in" Gatherings only during non-curfew hours. Public Health Emergency Order 2020-017 (July 5, 2020) reissued the Stay at Home order. The Stay at Home order then was downgraded to a Safer at Home order by Public Health Emergency Order No. 2020-021 (August 16, 2020).

III. The Navajo Nation is experiencing a rise in positive COVID-19 cases, including over 40 confirmed positive cases in the Sage Memorial Hospital service area and close to a dozen positive cases in the satellite chapters in the Eastern Navajo Agency. These cluster cases are a direct result of family gatherings and off-Reservation travel. They also have the potential to lead to an outbreak and another surge in cases on the Navajo Nation. The cluster cases also have the potential to overwhelm the health care system on the Navajo Nation if not mitigated immediately. As a preventive measure, a Stay at Home (Shelter in Place) Order is warranted.

IV. The intent and purpose of this Public Health Emergency Order No. 2020-023 is to re-issue the Stay at Home (Shelter in Place) requirements, effective immediately and continuing for a period of at least 7 days, and to implement a **full 57-Hour Weekend Lockdown from September 25, 2020 to September 28, 2020**, starting at 8:00 P.M. MDT on Friday and ending at 5:00 A.M. MDT on Monday. Additional weekend lockdowns may follow. These

measures are intended to further ensure an effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic by restricting movement of individuals on the Nation to limit contact to prevent the spread of the virus and to minimize the strain on medical response capabilities. 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.

V. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "COVID-19 cases and deaths have been reported in all 50 states, and the situation is constantly changing. Because travel increases your chances of getting infected and spreading COVID-19, **staying home is the best way to protect yourself and others from getting sick**."

VI. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Limiting face-to-face contact with others is the best way to reduce the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)" and "**the more closely you interact with others and the longer that interaction, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread**."

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. All individuals on the Navajo Nation shall **Shelter in Place** and must stay at home and strictly limit movement within and outside of their immediate communities, and limit public contact with others. Individuals may leave their place of residence only for emergencies or to perform **"Essential Activities,"** defined herein, which primarily include activities and tasks essential to health, safety, and welfare, as described below.

B. **Visitors** are required to refrain from traveling to the Navajo Nation at this time. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "COVID-19 cases and deaths have been reported in all 50 states, and the situation is constantly changing. Because travel increases your chances of getting infected and spreading COVID-19, **staying home is the best way to protect yourself and others from getting sick**."

C. All individuals on the Navajo Nation shall comply with the following consistent with the current Public Health Emergency Orders (as long as those Orders are in effect):

1. **Daily curfew** from 9:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. (From Public Health Emergency Order No. 2020-019 (August 6, 2020)).
2. **Weekend Lockdown:** All individuals on the Nation shall comply with the 57-hour **Weekend Lockdown** across the Nation **from September 25, 2020 to September 28, 2020**, starting at 8:00 P.M. MDT on Friday and ending at 5:00 A.M. MDT on Monday. All individuals shall remain at home during lockdown hours except in the event of an emergency or as described below:

a. Individuals are still permitted to cultivate food (i.e. farming) and tend to livestock. However, plan ahead to purchase hay and feed, if needed.

b. Individuals are not required to remain indoors during Weekend Lockdown. Outdoor activity is encouraged and individuals may leave their immediate residence or home site area for exercise such as running or hiking, so long as movement is restricted to no more than five (5) miles from one's home.

c. **Essential Businesses,** including *all stores*, *gas stations*, restaurants and drive-through food establishments shall be closed. Hay and all other vendors must cease operations for the duration of the Weekend Lockdown. This closure and cease operations requirement does not apply to Healthcare Operations, Essential Governmental Functions, or Essential Infrastructure (as those terms are defined below), or to Food Cultivation operations. Essential Employees reporting to or from duty are exempted from the Weekend Lockdown but must carry official identification or a letter of designation from their employer on official letterhead which includes a contact name and number for verification.

3. **Wear a mask properly in public** (From Public Health Emergency Order No. 2020-007 (April 17, 2020)).
4. **Avoid public gatherings of more than 5 people.** "Drive-In" Gatherings are permissible during non-curfew hours (From Public Health Emergency Order No. 2020-14 (June 5, 2020)).
5. **Maintain social (physical) distancing standards and requirements.**
6. **Remain in your vehicle** for curb-side and drive-through essential activities.

D. **Essential Businesses,** defined herein, are required to:

1. Ensure that adequate social distancing is practiced.
2. Ensure that high-touch surfaces are regularly disinfected.
3. Ensure that customers to wear masks.
4. Make efforts to ensure that customers have on-site access to handwashing stations, sanitizer, or gloves.
5. Limit the number of customers in any enclosed area.
6. To the greatest extent possible, operate on a curb-side or drive-through basis.
7. To the greatest extent possible, limit customer service before 6:00 A.M. (MDT) and after 8:00 P.M. (MDT) to permit customers to obey the daily curfew.

E. Nonessential businesses shall remain closed until 8:00 A.M. on Tuesday, September 29, 2020.

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

NOTICE IS FURTHER GIVEN that it is greatly advised that the public take the following preventive precautions:

1. **All persons on the Navajo Nation are required to stay home and leave home only when absolutely necessary for their health, safety, or welfare or as described herein.**

2. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

3. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing, or having been in a public place. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

4. To the extent possible, avoid touching high-touch surfaces in public places – elevator buttons, door handles, handrails, handshaking with people, etc. Use a tissue or your sleeve to cover your hands or finger if you must touch something.

5. Wear a mask and avoid touching your face, nose, eyes, etc.

6. Clean and disinfect your home to remove germs: practice routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces (for example: tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, toilets, faucets, sinks, and cell phones).

7. Avoid all public gatherings (no more than 5 people).

8. Avoid all non-essential travel.

9. Get an influenza (flu) vaccination as soon as possible and when safe to do so, and in accordance with the above requirements.

NOTICE IS FURTHER GIVEN that this Order shall take effect immediately on Tuesday, September 22, 2020, and shall remain in effect until rescinded or modified by a subsequent Order.

ADDITIONAL ADVISORIES AND ORDERS WILL FOLLOW AS CONDITIONS WARRANT. SO ORDERED THIS 22nd DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2020.

Herman Shorty, Program Supervisor III
Navajo Office of Environmental Health & Protection Program
Navajo Department of Health

Dr. Jill Jim, Executive Director
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Definitions

Emergency: a serious, unexpected, or dangerous situation requiring immediate action, including a medical condition that requires immediate treatment.

Essential Activities: (1) activities or tasks essential to the health and safety of one's household (including livestock and pets), such as obtaining critical medical supplies or medication, or visiting a health care professional for an imminent health need, or participating in a Traditional Navajo ceremony or prayer; (2) obtaining necessary services or supplies (such as canned food, dry goods, produce, pet supplies, meat, and any other household consumer products, and products necessary to maintain the safety, sanitation, and essential operation of a residence); (3) engaging in daytime outdoor activity such as walking, hiking, or running (From Public Health Emergency Order No. 2020-003, March 20, 2020); (4) Voting (From Public Health Emergency Order No. 2020-009, May 14, 2020); (5) Cultivate food (i.e. farming) and tend to livestock (From Public Health Emergency Order No. 2020-015 (June 16, 2020); (6) Working for an essential business or in an essential government function, or providing essential infrastructure services.

Essential Businesses: Healthcare Operation, Essential Governmental Functions, Essential Infrastructure (e.g., courts of law, medical providers for urgent care, public utilities, and critical school operations such as nutrition programs) (From Public Health Emergency Order No. 2020-002, March 19, 2020 and expanded through Public Health Emergency Order No. 2020-003, March 20, 2020 to include food cultivation (including farming and livestock), grocery stores, food banks, convenience stores, hardware stores and other establishments engaged in the retail sale of groceries and non-grocery products necessary to maintaining the safety, sanitation and essential operation of residences, among other things).

Essential Employees: Those employees identified by Essential Businesses deemed to be necessary to the continued operation of those Essential Businesses.

Essential Governmental Functions: means all services needed to ensure the continuing operation of the government agencies and provide for the health, safety and welfare of the public. (From Public Health Emergency Order No. 2020-002, March 19, 2020).

Essential infrastructure: Public works construction, construction of housing, water, sewer, gas, electrical, roads and highways, public transportation, solid waste collection and removal, internet, and telecommunications systems (including the provision of essential global, national, and local infrastructure for computing services, business infrastructure, communications, and web-based services). (From Public Health Emergency Order No. 2020-003, March 20, 2020).

Gathering: means any grouping together of individuals in a single connected location. (From Public Health Emergency Order dated March 18, 2020).

Social Distancing Requirements: Physical distancing by limiting contact of people within 6 feet from each other. (From Public Health Emergency Order No. 2020-002, March 19, 2020).

Social Distancing Standards: Physical distancing by not shaking hands, standing several feet away from other people, avoiding crowds, etc.) (From Public Health Emergency Order No. 2020-003, March 20, 2020).