



## The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

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### **President Biden signs Major Disaster Declaration for the Navajo Nation to assist with COVID-19 response efforts**

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer were informed by Federal Emergency Management Agency Acting Administrator Robert J. Fenton on Tuesday, that U.S. President Joe Biden signed a long-awaited Major Disaster Declaration for the Navajo Nation, which will provide more federal resources and prompts the release of federal funds for the reimbursement of emergency funds expended to address the COVID-19 pandemic on the Navajo Nation.

“With the signing of the Major Disaster Declaration by President Biden and the support of FEMA Acting Administrator Robert Fenton, the Navajo Nation will now work with FEMA to deliver more federal resources to help our communities combat COVID-19. Our administration has advocated for the declaration for quite some time, so we are very appreciative of the quick response from the Biden-Harris Administration. On Sunday, we met with White House officials to request more COVID-19 vaccines and other resources and we reaffirmed our request for the declaration also. The Navajo Nation has also stepped up with millions of dollars of our own funding, health care workers, and resources to fight COVID-19. This is a great step forward and now we have to step up our efforts and coordinate with FEMA,” said President Nez.

The Navajo Nation declared a Public Health State of Emergency on March 11, 2020, just days prior to its first confirmed case of COVID-19. The state of emergency remains in effect. On Dec. 3, 2020, President Nez and Vice President Lizer also issued a letter and a formal request to the White House for the Major Disaster Declaration.

“We are very pleased with today’s announcement. We have many of our Navajo people who are struggling not only with resources, but with the toll that the pandemic has taken on their mental and spiritual health. FEMA has been very supportive along with Navajo Area IHS. Our people are blessed to have so many of our own people who are stepping up in any ways to help one another as well,” said Vice President Lizer.

Under the newly declared Major Disaster Declaration, FEMA-4582-DR, FEMA will continue to support the Navajo Nation’s Response/Recovery to COVID-19. Under Public Assistance Category B

– Emergency Protective Measures, FEMA is committed to ensuring the Navajo Nations request for Direct Federal Assistance (DFA) continues to be supported. These include, but not limited to:

- Federal Medical Staffing Missions
- Potential Federal Medical Vaccine Support
- Requests for resources, supplies and equipment in response to COVID-19 on Navajo Nation
- Requests from the Navajo Nation that provide services, personnel and adequate resources that bring relief to the Navajo Nation’s overall response to COVID-19

“We have been honored to work with the Navajo Nation in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic for nearly a year. Navajo leaders have worked diligently to safeguard elders and other tribal members while working closely with partners to strengthen testing, deliver PPE and life-sustaining supplies, ensure medical treatment and now support vaccination efforts. The President’s major disaster declaration acknowledges the Navajo Nation’s ongoing needs, efforts and the strong nation-nation relationship we share. President Biden has taken actions in the past weeks to expand federal support to states, territories, local governments and tribal nations. Today’s major disaster declaration for the Navajo Nation affirms federal support to Navajo leaders and tribal members and the nation-nation partnership we value with the Navajo Nation,” said Robert J. Fenton, FEMA Acting Administrator.

The Navajo Nation will also coordinate with FEMA to work out the details of the cost sharing and other resources for COVID-19 relief efforts.

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