



The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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First case of COVID-19 U.K. variant confirmed on the Navajo Nation

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – On Tuesday, the Navajo Nation announced the first confirmed case of the COVID-19, SARS-CoV-2 Strain Variant B.1.1.7 also referred to as the U.K. variant, from a COVID-19 test sample that was obtained in the western portion of the Navajo Nation. The U.K. variant is currently the most dominant variant in the United States and has been detected in all 50 states, including many cases in the Four Corners states.

Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez was joined by Navajo Department of Health Executive Director Dr. Jill Jim, Navajo Area IHS officials, Dr. Laura Hammitt with John Hopkins University, and Dr. Amanda Burrage with Tuba City Regional Health Care Corporation, as he made the announcement during a live online town hall on Tuesday.

“We shouldn’t panic, but we should be informed about this new development. There is still much to be learned about this particular variant, but the evidence so far indicates that the UK variant is more contagious and is more severe in some cases. The U.K. variant has been detected in all 50 states, and now we have a confirmed case here on the Navajo Nation. The Navajo Department of Health continues to work with states and other partners to conduct surveillance to help identify if there are more variant cases. We don’t want to cause panic, but we want to reinforce the need to take all precautions by limiting travel, getting tested if symptoms occur, wearing one or two masks, avoiding medium to large in-person gatherings, practicing social distancing, and washing your hands often,” said President Nez.

According to the Navajo Department of Health, the person who tested positive for the U.K. variant received the COVID-19 vaccine over one month prior to testing positive and was hospitalized and is now recovering at home.

“In this particular case, the severity of the infection for this individual may have been reduced by the vaccine that the person received weeks prior. As we’ve said before, the vaccines do not guarantee that a person won’t become infected with COVID-19 and the variants, so it’s very important to continue taking all precautions even after you are fully vaccinated. The vaccines help to reduce the severity of the disease if you become infected with COVID-19. Everyone must continue to take all precautions including wearing a mask and limiting your travel to essential activities only. We continue to encourage our people to receive the COVID-19 vaccines, which are

effective in reducing the effects of COVID-19. If someone misses their second dose, they should schedule an appointment to get the second dose as soon as possible,” said Navajo Department of Health Executive Director Dr. Jill Jim.

Contact tracing was conducted and no further spread was identified beyond the one individual who tested positive for the U.K. variant. The Navajo Epidemiology Center, under the Navajo Department of Health and Health Command Operations Center, continues to coordinate with states and other testing facilities to sequence samples for the variants.

“Personal responsibility is key to reducing the spread of the U.K. variant. We know how to prevent the virus from spreading, but we all have to do our part. Please remain vigilant, keep taking all precautions, and continue to pray. Our health care experts are doing their best to mitigate the spread of the U.K. variant and to save lives,” said Vice President Lizer.

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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THE NAVAJO NATION

JONATHAN NEZ | PRESIDENT MYRON LIZER | VICE PRESIDENT



Navajo Department of Health Health Advisory Notice (HAN)

First COVID-19 case of the B.1.1.7 (U.K.) Variant identified on the Navajo Nation

WINDOW ROCK, AZ – The Navajo Health Command Operations Center under the Navajo Department of Health confirmed the nation’s first COVID-19 case of the B.1.1.7 variant. The B.1.1.7 variant also referred to as the U.K. variant and the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC) considers this variant a concern as it is highly transmissible. The case was detected through ongoing strain surveillance of COVID-19 positive samples collected from health facilities on the Navajo Nation. The Navajo Epidemiology Center (NEC) is leading the Navajo Nation SARS-CoV-2 Strain Surveillance (NNS3) Project under the Health Command Operations Center and in partnership with Navajo Area Indian Health Service and local Tribal Health Organizations (P.L. 93-638).

The case was confirmed mid-March and is an elder and resides in the Western Agency of the Navajo Nation. The case is recovering and none of the contacts tested positive. Routine contact tracing was completed and no additional cases were found.

We recommend the following safety precautions:

- Daily COVID-19 prevention measures will prevent the spread of variants. Avoid crowds, ventilate indoor spaces and remember the “3 Ws”:
 - Wear a mask
 - Watch your distance “Social/Physical distance”
 - Wash hands frequently
- Get vaccinated when you are eligible. COVID-19 vaccines prevent the occurrence of new variants. Studies suggest that the current COVID-19 vaccines will work well against the most common variants and will prevent severe disease.

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:

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