FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 10, 2022

11 new cases, 50,800 recoveries, and no recent death related to COVID-19, new Public Health Emergency Order issued

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – On Thursday, the Navajo Department of Health, in coordination with the Navajo Epidemiology Center and the Navajo Area Indian Health Service, reported 11 new COVID-19 cases for the Navajo Nation and no recent death. The total number of deaths is 1,655. The report indicates that 50,800 individuals have recovered from COVID-19. 499,982 COVID-19 tests have been administered. The overall total number of positive COVID-19 cases is now 52,685.

Navajo Nation COVID-19 positive cases by Service Unit:

- Chinle Service Unit: 10,073
- Crownpoint Service Unit: 5,129
- Ft. Defiance Service Unit: 5,356
- Gallup Service Unit: 8,846
• Kayenta Service Unit: 4,994
• Shiprock Service Unit: 9,765
• Tuba City Service Unit: 5,694
• Winslow Service Unit: 2,806

* 22 residences with COVID-19 positive cases are not specific enough to place them accurately in a Service Unit.

On Thursday, the state of New Mexico reported 384 new cases and Utah reported 186 new cases. The state of Arizona now reports COVID-19 cases on a weekly basis, each Wednesday.

The Department of Health also issued a public health emergency order on Thursday, which is posted online at: https://www.ndoh.navajo-nsn.gov/COVID-19. Public Health Emergency Order No. 2022-03 declares “Orange Status” for schools due to the decrease of COVID-19 cases. Schools must implement the required core prevention strategies and conditional prevention strategies noted in the Navajo Nation COVID-19 Safe Schools Framework, such as parent options for hybrid or virtual learning, use of masks, physical distancing, hygiene, cleaning and ventilation, diagnostic testing, contact tracing, required reporting, and COVID-19 vaccinations.

“Every day, we should be reminding ourselves and our loved ones to continue taking all precautions to avoid exposure to COVID-19. Spring break is here for many of our students, and it is important to stay safe. Many of our student athletes and their families are also competing in the basketball state finals in New Mexico, so we strongly urge them to take extra precautions as they cheer on their loved ones. We are in this together, and we must continue to support one another,” said Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez.

Health care facilities on the Navajo Nation continue to administer COVID-19 vaccines. If you would like to receive one of the COVID-19 vaccines, please contact your health care provider and schedule an appointment.

"Now that our schools are transitioning from 'red status' to 'orange status,' we have to participate to contribute to the downward trend in new cases of COVID-19. Please be very cautious, and do not travel, go to work, or attend school if you are sick, tested positive for COVID-19, haven’t ended isolation or quarantine, or are waiting for test results," said Vice President Myron 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: https://www.ndoh.navajo-nsn.gov/COVID-19. COVID-19 related questions and information, call (928) 871-7014.

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For the latest news from the Office of the President and Vice President, please visit http://www.opvp.navajo-nsn.gov/ or find us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.
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. In response to COVID-19, the Navajo Nation has developed the “Navajo Nation COVID-19 Safe Schools Framework” to declare the Nation’s “status” according thereto and to guide the reopening of all schools, including Head Start, across the Navajo Nation in proper compliance with the Framework. 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.

III. The Navajo Nation is experiencing a downward trajectory (decreasing) of cases. The Navajo Nation remains vigilant as neighboring states are lifting mitigation strategies to reduce the spread of COVID-19. The Navajo Nation has documented new cases of COVID-19 Omicron sublineages (BA.1.1, B.1.1.529 and BA.2) and Delta within the Navajo Nation. According to the CDC, the Omicron variant seem to spread more easily and quickly than the other previous variants, including Delta. CDC continues to identify Omicron and Delta as variants of concern. Breakthrough infections are expected and some treatments are not as effective against infection with Omicron. As coronavirus vaccines continue to be made available on the Navajo Nation, all preventative precautions should continue to be adhered to after receiving the vaccine.

IV. Mask wearing is required in schools. All individuals on the Nation two (2) years of age and older shall wear masks while in public (any area outside your home where you could come within 6 feet of someone who is not from your household). (Public Health Emergency Order No. 2021-015, August 4, 2021)

THEREFORE, NOTICE IS GIVEN that pursuant to 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. The Navajo Nation COVID-19 Safe Schools Framework is declared binding on all schools, including Head Start, across the Navajo Nation. All schools are required to comply with the Navajo Nation COVID-19 Safe Schools Framework and the Navajo Nation School Reopening Plan. Available at https://www.navajoreopening.navajo-nsn.gov/COVID-19-Safe-Schools-Framework

B. Per the Safe Schools Framework, the Navajo Health Command and Operations Center (NHCOC), having evaluated the current state of the Navajo Nation per the gating criteria and public health considerations provided in the Framework, declares the Navajo Nation to be in “Orange Status.” All schools shall be bound to the conditions and requirements of Orange status. The NHCOC will announce any future status changes by Public Health Emergency Order.

C. Orange status is defined as: Substantial Transmission of COVID-19. Schools must implement the required core prevention strategies and conditional prevention strategies noted in the Framework: parent options, use of masks, physical distancing, hygiene, cleaning and ventilation, diagnostic testing, contact tracing, required reporting, and COVID-19 vaccinations.

D. There is high transmission of cases, therefore, schools should enhance the frequency and HCOC also recommends implementation of the prevention strategies, consistent with the COVID-19 Safe Schools Framework. Accordingly, HCOC recommends to schools the following particularly with communities with high transmission rates (listing of health advisories can be found at https://www.ndoh.navajo-nsn.gov/COVID-19):

   a. Implement more aggressive physical distancing measures.
   b. Hybrid (in-person and virtual) or virtual learning shall be offered to the maximum extent possible.
   c. Limit gathering to 15 or fewer persons for non-classroom instruction events such as back-to-school, orientations and other community gatherings.
   d. Limit sport event attendance to 50% of maximum occupancy for indoor and outdoor seating areas, and consistent with HCOC guideline for school sporting events.
   e. Require students, staff and visitors to stay home if they are sick.
   f. Promptly report exposures using the HCOC portal (available at https://www.ndoh.navajo-nsn.gov/COVID-19) and notify the nearest local health facility (Indian Health Service or Tribal Health Organization). Exposures will be reported on the HCOC webpage of school exposures to notify the public.
E. All schools are required to create, submit, implement, and update a School Reopening Plan and complete an accompanying Reopening Readiness Assessment Attestation form. School Reopening Plans and completed Reopening Readiness Assessment Attestation forms should be submitted to the Department of Diné Education at: schoolreopening@nndode.org.

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

NOTICE IS FURTHER GIVEN that this Order shall take effect March 11, 2022 at 5:00 A.M. MST, and shall remain in effect until amended or rescinded by the Health Command Center.

ADDITIONAL ADVISORIES AND ORDERS WILL FOLLOW AS CONDITIONS WARRANT. SO ORDERED THIS 10th DAY OF MARCH, 2022.

Geraldine Thompson, Delegated Program Supervisor III
Navajo Office of Environmental Health & Protection Program
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Dr. Jill Jim, Executive Director
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Health Command Operations Center