



Navajo Nation: Covid-19 positive cases increase by 341 over the weekend, NTUA reports more completed projects under CARES

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PHOTO: CARES Act projects, such as this bathroom addition and underground septic system, are being completed by the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority in partnership with the Navajo Engineering and Construction Authority. Council allowed critical projects an extension on Friday to the end of the month, ahead of the December 30 deadline set by Congress.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — The Navajo Nation’s update to coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic situation report from the Health Command Operations Center (HCOC) for December 14, 2020 included data for testing, results, recoveries and mortalities related to Covid-19 in and around the Navajo Nation from the weekend.

Overall, 341 new cases were reported over the weekend with 183 on Saturday and 158 on Sunday. The total confirmed positive cases on the Navajo Nation is 19,766. The total number of mortalities related to Covid-19 on the Navajo Nation now totals 722 reported deaths since March. The report included 10,623 recovered cases. A total 183,332 Covid-19 tests have been administered with 150,808 tests that were returned with negative results.

“On behalf of the 24th Navajo Nation Council, I wish to express a deep appreciation to all the front-line workers and supporting staff who continue to respond to the strain and stresses of this pandemic with their dedicated efforts. Covid-19 cases continue to fluctuate on the Navajo Nation, but our call to follow social distancing and face covering guidelines is constant. Limited doses of the Pfizer vaccine have reached the Navajo Nation, and the Council is committed to ensuring Navajo People have confidence in the science when they make the decision to receive the vaccine or not,” said Speaker Seth Damon.

Saturday, Navajo leaders received updates from the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority (NTUA) on CARES Act-funded projects approved by the Council for water, electric, broadband, solar and cistern projects.

“For the past 14 weeks, NTUA has remained focused on extending utilities to families throughout the Navajo Nation and will continue to work hard to build and complete as multi-utility projects as possible to help mitigate the spread of Covid-19,” said NTUA representatives.

NTUA electric line crews have connected an additional 50 Navajo homes to the electrical grid totaling 478 homes with CARES Act funds as of December 10. NTUA continues to receive applications from Navajo families for electric connections, of which 145 homes needed right of way (ROW) acquisitions, 166 were released by the Navajo Nation Land Department for construction to proceed and 16 homes have pending service line agreements (SLA).

For homes unable to reach the electric grid, the Council approved funding for residential solar power units. NTUA reported 246 feasible homes for 3,000 kW solar unit placements. 167 homes need house-wiring, 98 homes have wiring completed and 45 homes are awaiting a house-wiring affidavit. Additionally, 39 homes belong to US Veterans, 210 homes have solar vendors working on sites and 128 solar units have been placed at homes and are awaiting final stages of construction before being commissioned.

NTUA also reported it has formed partnerships with Arizona Public Service (APS), Jemez Mountain Electric Co-op (JMEC), Socorro Electric Co-op (SEC) and Continental Divide Electric Co-op (CDEC) to reach 57 homes outside NTUA’s regular service area. 30 of 59 planned electric capacity projects have been completed, with 15 projects in construction in Aneth, Red Mesa, Mexican Water, Kinlichee, Kayenta and Shiprock.

In partnership with the Navajo Engineering and Construction Authority (NECA), NTUA identified 122 qualified families to receive water and solar cistern units to address a lack of water availability. NTUA reported, under the approved CARES Act expenditure plan, 75 bathroom foundations have been completed, 51 of 120 cistern systems and 54 of 121 septic systems have been installed. Additionally, 61 of 122 homes have electricity with 3 recently connected by NTUA. 31 of 122 homes need a solar unit, 2 of 122 will have a generator and 28 of 122 will be connected to the electric grid.

With CARES Act funds approved by the Council for water projects, NTUA reported pump and motor replacements for 60 of 63 water wells have been completed and 7 of 20 water well renovations are finished. Major water tank renovations are nearing completion in Fort Defiance, Sawmill and Newcomb. New water well construction is ongoing at Thoreau, Houck and Ganado, the longest projected completion date being December 29.

NTUA has also completed repairs and upgrades to 6 regional watering loading stations in Bodaway Gap, Leupp, Lupton, Wide Ruins, Torreon and Lake Valley. Livestock water loading stations have also been completed in Hunters Point, Leupp, Newcomb and Sheepsprings, with a Chinle site expected to be completed tomorrow. NTUA shared 95 percent of the Montezuma Creek arsenic removal water treatment plant has been completed and is expected to finish tomorrow. Wastewater facilities improvements include a wastewater trunk line renovation in Window Rock, which is expected to be completed by December 23, and a wastewater lagoon in Pinon, expected to be completed tomorrow.

To address demand, NTUA is also adding free student WiFi hotspots in Leupp and Oaksprings, bringing the number of locations to 41 with 2 additional locations to be determined.

With telecommunications and broadband infrastructure funding approved by the Council, NTUA reported, of 102 broadcast stations, 98 projects are uplifts in broadband service and 4 are new sites. NTUA expects 82 of 102 stations to be in-service by tomorrow. In Tuba City, NTUA reported backbone fiber construction to Pasture Canyon received necessary approval from the Hopi Tribe and contractors were immediately informed to complete construction.

A fiber line from Tonalea to the Navajo Generating Station is finished with only the installation of electronics remaining. NTUA reported area residents will notice enhanced data service to further help with distance learning.

On Friday, the Naabik'iyáti' Committee of the 24th Navajo Nation Council approved Resolution No. NABID-63-20 by a vote of 20 in favor and 3 opposed. The resolution extended the initial internal deadline for certain types of projects approved by the Council and funded through the CARES Act. Unspent and non-committed funds will be reverted to the Hardship Assistance Program to ensure all CARES Act funds are expended by the federal government's deadline of December 30.

More Data

Navajo Nation Covid-19 Cases by Service Unit:

Chinle Service Unit:	3,824
Gallup Service Unit:	3,270
Shiprock Service Unit:	3,260
Crownpoint Service Unit:	2,104
Ft. Defiance Service Unit:	2,106
Kayenta Service Unit:	1,942
Tuba City Service Unit:	2,030
Winslow Service Unit:	1,208

47 chapters reported positive cases with the communities of heightened concern being Shiprock (18), Tuba City (16), Chinle (10), Upper Fruitland (9), Tohatchi (7), Kaibeto (5), Kayenta (5), Pinon (5), St. Michaels (5) and Crownpoint (4).

The NDOH and the Navajo Epidemiology Center provided the updated Covid-19 figures in coordination with tribally-controlled Public Law 19-638 healthcare facilities and the Navajo Area Indian Health Service. More information, including Covid-19 testing locations, can be found on the Navajo Nation's Covid-19 website at: <https://www.ndoh.navajo-nsn.gov/COVID-19>.

The Office of Environmental Health and Protection, with the concurrence of the Navajo Department of Health (NDOH) and the HCOC, issued Public Health Emergency Order No. 2020-031. The order continues the Stay at Home (Shelter in Place) Lockdown Order for three weeks, including full 57-hour weekend lockdowns.

The HCOC General Hotline can be reached at (928) 871-7014. Inquiries and requests may be sent to NNHCOCPlans@navajo-nsn.gov. The HCOC hours of operation are Monday-Friday from 8am to 5pm, Saturday from 8am to 12pm and Sunday on standby status.

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