



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

CONTACTS:

Jared Touchin, Communications Director  
(928) 274-4275

Crystalyne Curley, Sr. Public Information Officer  
(928) 274-2758

[nnopvp.communications@gmail.com](mailto:nnopvp.communications@gmail.com)

---

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 13, 2020

### **Nez-Lizer announce temporary reduction in non-essential government services, closure of schools, and public parks to prevent spread of COVID-19**

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – On Friday, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer announced more proactive measures to prevent the potential spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus on the Navajo Nation by temporarily reducing the number of on-duty Executive Branch employees for the next three weeks, which does not include public safety personnel, firefighters, EMS personnel, Department of Emergency Management, Division of Finance, Division of Social Services, and others that provide essential direct services.

President Nez and Vice President Lizer issued an executive order on Friday, to notify Executive Branch employees. On Wednesday, a declaration of a Public Health State of Emergency for the Navajo Nation was issued in response to the growing spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus, also known as “Diko Ntsaaígíí-Náhást’éits’áadah” in the Navajo language. On Friday, the White House also declared a National Emergency concerning the novel coronavirus disease outbreak.

“The health and well-being of our Navajo people is the top priority. There are no confirmed cases of the COVID-19 coronavirus on the Navajo Nation, however under the careful advisement of health experts, emergency preparedness personnel, and other experts the Navajo Nation COVID-19 Preparedness Team continues to move forward with preventive measures to ensure the safety and well-being of the Navajo people,” said President Nez.

Based on a resolution of the Navajo Nation Board of Education passed on Friday, grant schools, contract schools, and BIE schools will also close for three weeks. All FACE Programs, Early Childhood Programs, Child Care Development Fund Programs, and Navajo Head Start Programs are also included in the three-week closure.

“We are not intending to create panic, but we want everyone to be prepared. We’re staying on top of the situation and we are constantly monitoring the spread of the virus. To our Navajo people, we ask them to make good decisions and to take good care of themselves and their loved ones,” stated Vice President Lizer.

President Nez and Vice President Lizer also met with Division Directors and directed each division to identify essential employees for direct services and also to finalize contingency plans.

Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources Executive Director Dr. Rudy Shebala also directed the Parks and Recreation Department to immediately close all Navajo Nation Parks and Recreation Areas until further notice due to growing concerns for the health of the general public.

President Nez and Vice President Lizer also issued a letter to the Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise, urging their board and management to close gaming facilities on the Navajo Nation to further prevent the potential spread of the virus. They also encourage all Navajo Nation enterprises to consider similar measures to prioritize the health and well-being of the public.

“We urge the Navajo public to stay home and refrain from large public events and use their best discretion to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus. Please continue to pray for the Nation and all people as we persevere through this. We are resilient and we will overcome this health emergency,” added President Nez.

The Navajo Nation COVID-19 Preparedness Team will hold its third radio forum on Thursday, March 12<sup>th</sup> beginning at 6:00 p.m. on KTNN 660AM and 101.5FM to provide information and receive questions. The Navajo Nation Department of Health is offering to provide presentations to communities and other groups. Please send requests by email to [coronavirus.info@nndoh.org](mailto:coronavirus.info@nndoh.org) or visit their website for additional information: <http://www.ndoh.navajo-nsn.gov/COVID-19>.

The Navajo Nation COVID-19 Preparedness Team will continue to coordinate with the county, state, and federal officials to monitor the evolving impacts of the coronavirus and continue to encourage the public to take precautions.

# # #

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.