

Controller's Office begins issuing CARES Act checks

Written by Staff Reports

Friday, 29 January 2021 06:02



WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Over \$226 million in initial CARES Act Hardship Assistance checks are in the process of being printed and mailed. The Navajo Nation Office of the Controller reported that the checks for over 200,000 applicants will soon be on their way.

The Office of the Controller said it began mailing the checks in batches of 20,000 – 25,000 Jan. 18.

For mailing addresses on the Navajo Nation, the time for delivery could be longer than mailing addresses in major metropolitan areas such as Phoenix or Albuquerque. The Office of the Controller advises applicants to wait three to four weeks before calling the Support Center to check on the status of a payment.

Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez said, “We ask our people to remain patient as the checks are mailed and delivered in the coming days. This is the very first time that the Navajo Nation has taken on this type of financial disbursement for a majority of enrolled members.

“We ask all of our people to use the Hardship Assistance funds for essential items only, to help your family and loved ones.”

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The Nez-Lizer Administration approved the Hardship Assistance relief funds Oct. 9 and gave the Office of the Controller the job of overseeing and administering the program, in accordance with the resolution passed by the 24th Navajo Nation Council. In previous reports to the Council, the Office of the Controller has also reported that the administering of the funds must be completed in accordance with federal CARES Act guidelines and requirements.

Vice President Lizer emphasized that the risks associated with the novel coronavirus are still high.

"The virus is still in our communities, in our region, and in every state across the country," he said. "Please use the hardship assistance funds to secure essential items that help to keep your families safe and prepared during this COVID-19 pandemic.

"We continue to encourage our Navajo people to buy Navajo, buy local. Staying local is much safer than traveling longer distances to areas where the virus is more prevalent. Please be safe and continue to pray for all of our people," Lizer said.

Individual checks will be sent to all approved applicants listed on an application. Payment will not be made to an applicant until the completed application is approved. For example, if there is an issue with one individual on an application that contains four applicants, payment will not be made until all four applicants are approved. Since checks will be sent to each individual applicant, allow one week from receipt of a check before calling to learn the status of other checks included on the application.

Approximately 15,000 individuals selected the pick-up or will-call option as opposed to having their checks mailed to their addresses. Due to COVID-19 safety concerns, the pick-up option is still being evaluated in collaboration with the Navajo Department of Health. A date for pick-up has not yet been determined and it is expected that it will be several weeks before a safe alternative is developed. If you selected the pick-up option and would like to have your check mailed instead, contact the Support Center.

Having your check mailed as opposed to the pick-up option, provides a quicker alternative to receiving your payment.

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Based on the final amount allocated to the Hardship Program, the maximum payment is \$1,350 for adults and \$450 for minors. This amount represents a 90-percent funding of the program. As such, each applicant will receive 90-percent of their requested amount based on their demonstrated need on their submitted application.

Call volume at the Support Center has been at a record high over the last two weeks causing longer than expected wait times. To help manage the call volume, the Controller's Office added additional Support Center resources and urges Navajo Nation members to refrain from calling unless they suspect there is an issue with their application. The Support Center will be contacting members directly if there is an issue with processing their applications.

The Office of the Controller continues to work to resolve issues with approximately 45,000 separate applications. Please call the Office of the Controller's Support Center at (833) 282-7248 or send an email to NNCaresHelp@nnooc.org if you have questions about the status of your application.