

Navajo Division of Transportation crews repair roadways damaged by heavy rainfall

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TOHATCHI, N.M. – Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez was accompanied by Navajo Nation Department of Emergency Management Manager Harland Cleveland July 5 as he visited the communities of Tohatchi and Mexican Springs, N.M., to offer support for personnel who are on the ground working to repair roadways that were damaged by heavy rainfall on July 4.

Nez was also joined by Division of Transportation Director Garret Silversmith and Division of Community Development Director Dr. Pearl Yellowman. Over 15 communities in the Fort Defiance and Eastern Navajo Agencies have been impacted by flash-flooding. No serious injuries or loss of life have been reported.

“We are very grateful for the blessing of rain and moisture, but we need to remain proactive in assisting our communities that have been impacted,” Nez said. “Today, we also met with county and federal officials to continue coordinating road repairs and to ensure that Community Health Representatives are checking on elders and disabled people and providing assistance.”

Nez asked for people’s patience as the roads get fixed.

“We understand that multiple roads are either washed out or heavily damaged and we have every resource available helping to fix those issues as quickly as possible, but it will take some

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time due to the circumstances created by the heavy rainfall,” Nez said. “We ask for everyone to be very careful and please do not enter flooded areas by foot or vehicle. If you have loved ones in the area, please check on them while we work on providing additional support.”

Silversmith reported that his teams are coordinating with federal and state entities to mobilize more heavy equipment in order to clear and repair roadways. In some areas, the water levels are still too high to allow workers to safely conduct repairs. Once water levels subside, work crews will be able to safely access the area to begin working. Surrounding communities have also donated heavy equipment to other communities to assist with response efforts.

According to Navajo Department of Health Executive Director Dr. Jill Jim, there have been no reported health emergencies. NDOH continues working with chapters and Community Health Representatives to identify community members in need or who may be stranded due to the flooding. Jim also reported that the Health Command Operations Center is working with Community Health Representatives to conduct wellness checks.

Navajo Tribal Utility Authority Deputy General Manager Rex Kontz said utility crews have responded to several calls and are continuing to monitor the region.

“Responding to these situations is always a coordinated effort among multiple jurisdictions. While the roads are moist, we have to take advantage of the opportunity to effectively grade roads as well,” Nez said. “July is monsoon season and everyone should be prepared in advance for these situations. I appreciate all of the men and women on the ground who are working hard to help residents at this time.”

“We are very grateful that no serious injuries have been reported. As we always say, we are in this together and we must continue to support one another. Most importantly, please keep praying for our people as we work through yet another challenge. We prayed for moisture for our land, livestock, and agriculture and our prayers have been answered,” Vice President Myron Lizer said.

The Navajo Nation Department of Emergency Management strongly urges all residents to remain home as much as possible during heavy rainfall, to use extreme caution when driving in rainy conditions, and to never enter flooded areas in a vehicle or by foot. The Office of the

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President and Vice President will continue to provide support and assistance to the impacted communities.

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