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– JOINT PRESS RELEASE –

Navajo Nation resolves technical issues to expand Wireless Emergency Alerts for iPhone users

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WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Speaker Seth Damon of the 24th Navajo Nation Council are pleased to announce that the Navajo Nation Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (NNTRC) recently resolved technical issues that prevented certain iPhone users on the Navajo Nation from receiving Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEAs).

iPhone users are strongly encouraged to download the Apple iOS15 software on their wireless devices today to receive AMBER Alerts, imminent threat alerts, public safety alerts, and presidential alerts from the Navajo Nation government.

“The Wireless Emergency Alerts system is critical in emergency situations including helping to notify the public when a person goes missing. The Navajo Nation Telecommunications Regulatory Commission, under the leadership of Chairman Arvin Trujillo and Executive Director Christopher Becenti, worked diligently with federal partners to resolve the technical issues and move us closer to closing the digital gap on the Navajo Nation. The expanded use of wireless alerts has the potential to save lives and notify our communities of emergency situations much quicker than other means of communication,” said President Nez.

The NNTRC identified several technical issues with regional wireless carriers and worked with the Navajo Department of Emergency Management, FEMA, the Federal Communications Commission, and others to develop solutions that fixed these issues.

“Improving the broadband system to help first responders and our public safety officials has been a top priority of the Navajo government,” said Speaker Seth Damon (Bááhaalí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Red Rock, Rock Springs, Tséyatoh). “We commend the NNTRC for their leadership in pushing this initiative forward. The safety of our elders and those most vulnerable is important as we keep our Navajo families informed of any emergency situation. We can now immediately alert the Navajo people should one of our family members go missing or there exists a public safety threat.”

In recent years, the Navajo Nation has stepped up its efforts to expand the AMBER Alert system and a comprehensive 9-1-1 system that can cover the 27,000 square-miles of the largest tribal nation in the United States.

“This is not only about expanding notifications for wireless users, but it addresses public safety issues when it comes to emergencies and missing persons. The quicker we can alert the public about

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a person who has gone missing, the greater chances of finding the person safely. Our first responders are a top priority when it comes to the use of the American Rescue Plan Act funds and we intend to improve our telecommunications system substantially,” stated Vice President Myron Lizer.

Funding for the construction of new broadband internet connections across the Navajo Nation is included in Legislation No. 0257-21 allocating over \$1.16 billion in American Rescue Plan Act funding. Speaker Damon is the bill sponsor and continues to work with the Executive Branch to address the emergency needs of 110 chapters.

“The construction of broadband fiber optic lines and connecting wireless internet to homes during this pandemic is important to the safety of the Navajo Nation. Now is the time for all wireless providers to join us in a collective conversation on how we effectively communicate emergency announcements to the Navajo people, especially those in rural areas. Saving lives begins when we give correct information to everyone when one of our children goes missing or a community has a dire emergency situation. That is what Wireless Emergency Alerts do for us - it saves and protects the lives of our loved ones,” said Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Cove, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Red Valley, Tsé’ahnáoozt’íí, Sheep Springs, Beclabito, Gad’ií’áhí/Tó Ko’í).

To update to the Apple iOS15 software, iPhone users must be connected to the internet, go to “Settings,” then tap “General,” and “Software Update” on their wireless device.

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