



Navajo Nation Department of Emergency Management

PO Box 2908, Window Rock, AZ 86515 | P: (928) 871-6892 | F: (928) 871-7569

MEMORANDUM

To: Honorable Dr. Buu Nygren, President
Office of the President/Vice President

Honorable Crystalyne Curley, Speaker
Navajo Nation Council

Honorable Council Delegates
25th Navajo Nation Council

From: Rory Atcitty, Police Commander
Delegated Emergency Management Director
NDPS | Navajo Department of Emergency Management

Date: January 23, 2024

Subject: **Comprehensive Report on Operation Winter Storm 2024**

I am pleased to present to you this extensive report on the Navajo Department of Emergency Management's ongoing response efforts regarding the series of winter storms affecting our communities, referred to as Operation Winter Storm 2024.

Background Information: On December 18, 2023, the leadership at the Navajo Nation Department of Emergency Management made the prudent decision to put together a task force in anticipation of the high likelihood of severe winter weather in the coming weeks. This proactive task force, comprising members from Public Safety, concentrated their efforts on several preparedness activities to make sure our department was ready to respond efficiently and effectively. These activities included stockpiling important emergency supplies, thoroughly coordinating with local Navajo chapters to fully assess potential needs and develop a comprehensive map of available resources and capabilities, and diligently fostering strong collaboration across the many diverse departments within the Navajo Nation government to guarantee a unified and cooperative response.

Timeline of Critical Events: The first major storm, dubbed Winter Storm Finn, arrived on January 5, 2024. As soon as this occurred, the Navajo Nation Department of Emergency Management promptly responded by activating a Level 2 Emergency Operations Center, initially on a part-time basis to manage the sudden influx of incoming requests for assistance. After assessing the magnitude and severity of the situation, the department leadership appropriately made the



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decision to establish a fully operational, Level 1 Emergency Operations Center on January 10, 2024. This allowed us to provide the coordinated and urgent response necessary during major emergency events. The Operation Winter Storm 2024 organized response effort officially began on January 8 and has continued relentlessly up until today, January 23, 2024.

Details of Response Efforts: Since the Level 1 Emergency Operations Center became fully activated on January 10, our department has coordinated a very comprehensive response including several impactful efforts. We hosted an extremely useful Resource Mapping Meeting, bringing together representatives from a diverse collection of Navajo Nation departments, programs, and divisions all across Navajo. This allowed us to synchronize efforts and maximize efficiency. We also prioritized collaborative work with external agencies, maintaining strong communication channels with emergency management officials from surrounding areas in Apache County, McKinley County, and San Juan County, Utah and New Mexico. This cooperation has been invaluable. Additionally, we have addressed 139 individual requests for assistance from 44 different Navajo Chapters encompassing the Fort Defiance, Chinle, Eastern, Western, and Northern agencies. The types of needs have varied greatly, with 60 requests for snow removal, 9 requests for heating fuel, 19 requests regarding human life and safety, and 51 with multiple pressing needs. Our emergency responders have worked tirelessly, completing 135 of the 139 requests successfully so far, with all needs addressed. Only 4 requests remain open at this time, and we are actively working to resolve them.

Current Priorities: At this crucial stage of response, our department has designated the following areas as top priorities:

- Ensuring the continued safety and well-being of all members of our Navajo communities across the Nation.
- Coordinating the distribution of important resources such as food, water, fuel, and supplies to high risk clientele in need of assistance.
- Conducting comprehensive snow and mud removal operations throughout impacted areas. We aim to clear vital roads and transportation arteries.
- Maintaining clear communication and close collaboration with our valued partners, both within the Navajo Nation and with external agencies. We understand that cooperation is key during crisis situations.
- Meticulously tracking costs, expenditures, resource utilization, and all response data. We aim to be transparent and provide full accounting to oversight entities.



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Next Steps Moving Forward: As we transition toward long-term recovery efforts in the coming days and weeks, the Navajo Nation Department of Emergency Management has identified several next steps that will guide our focus:

- We will continue monitoring the weather situation closely and stand ready to adjust our response efforts accordingly if required. Safety remains our top priority.
- Our team will conduct thorough damage assessments across all impacted communities. This will allow us to prioritize recovery projects and identify lingering risks.
- We aim to swiftly initiate long-term recovery planning, focusing on securing the wellbeing and resilience of the Nation.
- Recognizing the flooding risks associated with melting snow, we will prioritize planning and preparation efforts to mitigate potential flood damage.
- We will actively seek out additional resources and support from valued partners at the state and federal emergency management levels. Their assistance will prove critical for recovery.

In Closing Throughout Operation Winter Storm 2024, the Navajo Nation Department of Emergency Management has remained completely dedicated to protecting Navajo communities through proactive preparation, robust emergency response, and resilient long-term recovery. We deeply appreciate the leadership and guidance of the Navajo Nation Council throughout this response, and we stand fully prepared to provide any additional details that may help support your vital oversight of these ongoing response and recovery efforts.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rory Atcitty".

Rory Atcitty, (D) Emergency Management Director
Navajo Nation Department of Emergency Management