



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

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Arizona Gov. Hobbs visits Incident Command Post to discuss impacts of the Oak Ridge Fire



Left to right: Council Delegate Vince James, Arizona Governor Katie Hobbs, Speaker Crystalyne Curley, and Council Delegate Dr. Andy Nez. Gov. Hobbs visited the Oak Ridge Fire Incident Command Post on July 5.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – On Saturday, Arizona Gov. Katie Hobbs visited the Oak Ridge Fire Incident Command Post at the Navajo Division of Transportation to receive updates on the status of the fire and to offer her support during the recovery phase.

Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren and 25th Navajo Nation Council Speaker Crystalyne Curley joined Gov. Hobbs to discuss reinstating the Mutual Aid Compact, which would help allocate expanded resources during emergency crises like the Oak Ridge Fire.

“Today, I visited Navajo Nation and met with the brave first responders who have been on the frontlines battling the Oak Ridge Fire. I’m grateful to them for their tireless efforts to protect residents, homes, and land. We will continue to coordinate closely with our federal, Tribal, and local partners as they work to contain this fire. My administration stands ready to support the Navajo Nation and ensure that those impacted by this fire have what they need to recover,” said Governor Katie Hobbs.

President Nygren noted that the Oak Ridge Fire is one of the two largest fires to impact the Navajo Nation. “In 2014, our people faced the Assayii Lake Fire that burned over 14,000 acres in the Chooshgai Mountains. We thank our fire crews for their rapid response in securing the perimeter and sealing critical borders to protect the Navajo people.”

Speaker Curley thanked the Southwest Complex Incident Management Team Type 2, Navajo Nation Rangers, and all Navajo Nation fire crews for their collective efforts.

"We have over 600 firefighters on scene, and we're grateful to the Southwest Incident Management Team Type 2 for expediently creating fire lines to protect our people as fire raged close to residential areas, senior centers, schools, and even our backyards," said Speaker Curley.

Speaker Curley noted that when taking office in January 2023, one of her priorities was extending the Mutual Aid Compact which has only recently expired.

Gov. Hobbs was accompanied by State Forester Thomas Torres, who emphasized that the State of Arizona prioritizes the safety of all its citizens and forest lands.

"We have over 600 firefighters engaged, and 200 of those are related to state agencies and contracts," Torres said. "We look forward to working closely with the Navajo Nation on wildfire issues in the future."

Council Delegates Dr. Andy Nez and Vince James were also present at the Incident Command Post and extended their appreciation to Governor Hobbs for visiting the site and supporting the Navajo Nation during this crisis. Delegate Dr. Nez emphasized his commitment to staying informed, noting that he has attended every briefing since the Oak Ridge Fire began in order to keep himself and the communities he represents fully updated on the situation and response efforts.

Bureau of Indian Affairs Acting Navajo Regional Director Deborah Shirley stated that the coming weeks will be critical in assessing the severe impacts of the Oak Ridge Fire on the land, vegetation, wildlife, and sacred cultural sites.

"We're working on fire suppression, but we must look at long-term impacts on the land and our people. Grazing is going to be heavily impacted. There will be other critical areas we'll need to address moving forward," Shirley said.

Department of Emergency Management Director Sharon Sandoval, who also serves as Joint Incident Commander for Oak Ridge Fire Incident Command Post, commended the collaborative response effort.

"We have all the expertise at the table for the benefit of our people," Sandoval said. "We need to reinstate the Arizona Mutual Aid Compact so that we can call on the state during emergencies like this."

The fire has not grown significantly in the past four days, and additional growth is not expected, added Sandoval.

Over the next 24-72 hours, NDEM will begin shifting its efforts to the recovery phase of the fire and redistribute the massive amount of donations to the impacted chapters.

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