



The Navajo Nation
Office of the President and Vice President

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**Navajo Nation to return to “Orange Status”
starting on Monday due to the increase in COVID-19 cases**

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — On Thursday, the Navajo Department of Health issued three new Public Health Emergency Orders declaring “Orange Status” for businesses, schools, and revising in-person gathering limits for certain events in response to the recent increase in COVID-19 cases on the Navajo Nation. The new public health emergency orders will go into effect on Monday, August 16, 2021. The Navajo Nation’s mask mandate remains in effect. There is no daily curfew or lockdown in effect.

“As we’ve previously stated, based on the data and information from contact tracers the recent increase in new COVID-19 cases is largely due to social and family gatherings where people don’t wear masks and don’t take precautions. The other factor is people traveling off the Navajo Nation, not wearing a mask in public, and bringing the virus home and infecting other family members. The provisions under the “Orange Status” are not as stringent for businesses this time around because the data from contact tracers does not show that COVID-19 is being spread in businesses, but rather through social and family gatherings. We’ve been in this pandemic for over a year now and we should all know how to protect ourselves. The difference between this time last year and the uprise in cases we are seeing now, is that we have a high percentage of our people vaccinated and our public health experts have provided us with the guidance to reduce the spread of the virus,” said Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez.

Public Health Emergency Order No. 2021-017 declares “Orange Status” for businesses. The 50% maximum occupancy level remains in place for the following:

- Restaurants, including indoor dining, drive-thru, curbside, and outdoor dining
- Marinas and parks, tour businesses must follow the Health Command Operations Center’s Reopening Guidelines for Tour Businesses
- Navajo casinos
- Lodging and hotels including campgrounds and RV parks
- Museums and zoos

Additional provisions for businesses:

- Personal care and services are allowed by appointment only, with cleaning between appointments
- Flea markets and roadside markets are allowed in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Health Command Operations Center

Public Health Emergency Order No. 2021-018 declares “Orange Status” for all schools, which is defined as substantial transmission of COVID-19 on the Navajo Nation. Schools must implement all the required core prevention strategies and conditional prevention strategies noted in the Safe Schools Framework previously issued by the Department of Diné Education including parent options, use of masks, physical distancing, student cohorting, hygiene, cleaning and ventilation, diagnostic testing, contact tracing, required reporting, and COVID-19 vaccinations.

The Navajo Department of Health recommends schools, especially those in communities with high transmission rates, following these guidelines:

- Implement more aggressive social distancing measures
- Hybrid learning is encouraged
- Limit gathering to 15 or fewer persons for non-classroom instruction events such as back-to-school, orientations, and other community gatherings
- Virtual learning is encouraged for those age 12 years and younger
- Require students, staff, and visitors to stay home if they are sick
- Promptly report exposures using the HCOC portal available at <https://www.ndoh.navajonnsn.gov/COVID-19> and notify the nearest local health facility

Public Health Emergency Order No. 2021-019 limits in-person gatherings to 15 people for the following:

- Social gatherings
- Traditional ceremonies
- Churches and other houses of worship
- Outdoor recreational activities
- Youth programs

Additional provisions for gatherings:

- 25 or fewer persons permitted for in-person meetings and trainings
- Drive-in gatherings limited to 50 vehicles or less

“Personal responsibility is key to bringing down the numbers of new infections. Our health care professionals have gone above and beyond to guide us and protect us. The choices we make every day impact the trend in new cases, so please be very careful, wear masks in public, and get fully vaccinated as soon as possible. We have to work together and support one another to keep our communities safe,” said Vice President Myron Lizer.

The Navajo Department of Health also noted the following:

- The Navajo Nation is activating additional contact tracers to provide more coverage
- The cluster investigation unit is actively identifying outbreaks and clusters in the communities
- Hospitals are preparing for more cases, including the need for more medical staffing in the event of another large surge
- The Delta variant is detected in most of the sequencing for the Navajo Nation
- In-person gatherings are a primary driver of clusters on the Navajo Nation

All public health emergency orders are available online at: <https://www.ndoh.navajo-nsn.gov/COVID-19>.

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