



For Media Release

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NTUA ANNOUNCES LIGHT UP NAVAJO III

FORT DEFIANCE, AZ—The Navajo Tribal Utility Authority (NTUA) is preparing to welcome to the Navajo Nation sister utility companies to participate in the Light Up Navajo III (LUN III) initiative, a mutual aid project that extends service to Navajo homes without electricity.

The LUN III initiative is set to begin April 3, 2022, and last for 11 weeks. The goal is to connect 300 families' homes to the electric grid for the first time. The American Public Power Association (APPA) is also lending support to organize the event.

"Working together is how things get done. NTUA and the American Public Power Association (APPA) have demonstrated that through the successful electrification of hundreds of homes for Navajo families through Light Up Navajo," said Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez. "With the support of the leadership of the Navajo Nation, NTUA continues to connect the homes of our families to the electric grid. We are proud of the work being done and we look forward to seeing more Navajo homes connected with the continued partnership success of Light Up Navajo III."

Beginning in April 2022, utility companies and organizations from 10 states, including Arkansas, Arizona, Delaware, California, Connecticut, North Carolina, New Mexico, Ohio, Texas, Utah, and Washington D.C. There will be up to four crews working each week at different locations throughout the Navajo Nation.

"The Navajo Nation appreciates our partners in this collaborative effort to bring much-needed electricity to hundreds of homes this spring. We commend the NTUA and the APPA for leading this project to help improve the standard of life for our families. Financing the cost to construct electric service can be a burden for many, so the Light Up Navajo initiative will serve as the foundation to allow people to connect to the internet and modernize a way of living," said Speaker Seth Damon (Bááhaalí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Red Rock, Rock Springs, Tséyatooh). "The Navajo people are grateful for all the volunteer line workers and the utility companies involved to make this happen."

First executed in 2019, the LUN project represents an unprecedented partnership between a tribal utility company and the American Public Power Association (APPA), the service organization for more than 2,000 community-owned electric utility companies in the United States.

"Public power utilities have shown over the years that they are incredible at stepping up to help each other," said APPA President & CEO Joy Ditto. "We are well practiced in sending aid in the wake of natural disasters, and we are leveraging these skills to help bring power to those who still don't have it in our country in the year 2022, a situation that must be rectified."

According to NTUA General Manager Walter Haase, the partnership embodies the true American spirit of helping one another. In its first year, the project connected more than 230 homes to electricity, reducing the total number of U.S. homes without electricity by one percent.

“We are grateful that outside communities are sending their electric crews to help,” said General Manager Haase. “These visiting crews are ready to help build and will be ready to celebrate with Light Up Navajo III families after they get connected. The project will not only make a positive life changing impact on our families, but it also powerful impression on the lineworkers and their communities who proudly volunteer their services.”

In 2020 the Coronavirus pandemic forced the cancellation of the Light Up Navajo II (LUN II) project. The suspension was not an easy decision for NTUA, knowing there were families waiting years for electricity. There were 48 utility companies from 15 states that had signed up for the project. Although the project was canceled for the health, safety, and well-being of everyone involved, preparation resulted in NTUA acquiring the necessary clearances and making 330 projects construction ready.

In August 2020, NTUA received funds from the Navajo Nation through the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), and connected 330 Navajo homes initially identified and prepared for shovel-ready status through LUN II. Overall, 737 families received electricity through the CARES Act funding in 2020.

In 2021, NTUA spent most of the year preparing for LUN III, working with the Navajo Nation Land Department and with the families requesting electric service. NTUA had to secure Rights of Way, land clearances, permits and wire homes so that they will be ready to have their homes ready to be connected to the electric grid.

Since 2019, Light Up Navajo families have been experiencing an improved quality of life, enjoying modern conveniences like refrigerated food, heating, air conditioning, and lights. Life has moved forward without kerosene lamps, candles, flashlights, ice chests, and wood or coal for cooking and heating purposes.

“We prayed for electricity for so many years because Navajo life can be hard,” said Phyllis Littlefoot, of Tonalea, Ariz., who waited 13 years for electricity. “Now that we have power, we can go shopping for a week at a time. We don’t have to drive to town so often.”

“Our collective goal is the same – we all want to provide Navajo families with the same access to electricity. Light Up Navajo was built on teamwork and partnership to create a meaningful, life changing project,” Haase said. “We look forward to working with the visiting crews, and we especially look forward to seeing the heartfelt joy on the faces of families who have been waiting so long for electric service.”

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About NTUA: NTUA has continuously served the Navajo people for 63 years. The NTUA was established on January 22, 1959, to address the absence of utilities on the Navajo Nation. NTUA has grown into a thriving tribally-owned enterprise delivering a portfolio of services. The NTUA is organized for the operation, maintenance, and expansion of electric, communications, natural gas, water, wastewater, and renewable energy generation, including residential photovoltaic (solar) services for the Navajo people at a low and reasonable cost. The fundamental goals of NTUA are to create employment opportunities, improve the health and welfare of regional residents, and to improve the standard of life on the Navajo Nation.

About APPA: The American Public Power Association is the voice of not-for-profit, community-owned utilities that power 2,000 towns and cities nationwide. We represent public power before the federal government to protect the interests of the more than 49 million people that public power utilities serve, and the 96,000 people they employ. Our association advocates and advises on electricity policy, technology, trends, training, and operations. Our members strengthen their communities by providing superior service, engaging citizens, and instilling pride in community-owned power.