

## CAPITAL BRIEFS

### Using CARES Act money, NTUA connects 260 homes

**WINDOW ROCK** — In an update report Oct. 9 from Navajo Tribal Utility Authority on the use of CARES Act funds, 260 homes were connected to the electric grid, 32 water wells were upgraded and work continues on installation of 150 water cistern systems, according to a press release from the president's office.

NTUA's efforts are to help the Nation spend the CARES Act money by the deadline of Dec. 30.

"The families have expressed to our crews their heartfelt gratitude that electricity has finally reached their homes," said Walter Haase, general manager of NTUA. "Constructing the identified CARES Act projects is a challenging goal which we will work hard to surpass because as we are connecting homes, more families are coming forward submitting their applications for electricity."

"We postponed all other non-CARES Act funded projects so that we may meet the deadline," Haase said. "There is a short window for construction and we needed to get started as soon as possible."

NTUA utility crews work 10-hour days and on weekends and holidays to complete projects.

NTUA plans to extend electricity to 510 families, which includes over 350 families that were identified during the 2020 Light Up Navajo II application process.

In addition, NTUA continues to accept applications from residents for its residential solar program, which was allocated \$35.1 million in CARES Act funds. (For more information about eligibility for the solar program, please visit [www.ntua.com](http://www.ntua.com) under CARES Act-NTUA Projects.)

In August, the Navajo Nation Council and the Nez-Lizer Administration approved from CARES Act funds \$13.8 million for power line projects, \$24.7 million to increase electric grid capacity, \$20.9 million for cistern systems, \$18.6 million for wastewater systems, and \$32.8 million for wireless and broadband expansion.

Among many water projects, NTUA crews renovated, upgraded, and/or installed six regional water loading stations in Bodaway-Gap, Leupp, Lupton, Torreon, Lake Valley, and Wide Ruins, which are now open for public use. Renovations and upgrades are also in progress in Chilchinbeto, Inscription House, Whitecone, Kin Dah Lichii, and Pueblo Pintado.

NTUA is also working to replace motors and pumps for up to 42 targeted water wells, and working with Navajo Engineering and Construction Authority to install 150 water cistern systems where there is no water available for household drinking water and bathroom and kitchen usage.

Other projects include renovations and upgrades of regional water stations, construction of several new watering points, converting off-line-wells to watering loading stations for livestock, water well renovations, replacement of exposed



COURTESY PHOTO | NAVAJO TRIBAL UTILITY AUTHORITY

**Navajo Tribal Utility Authority linemen work 10-hour days to push toward meeting the December deadline to spend CARES Act money.**

water lines, and more.

NTUA has also established 33 free Wi-Fi hotspots in communities across the Nation to help students, parents, and teachers with online learning.

NTUA and NTUA Choice Wireless are assessing the possibility of installing additional Wi-Fi hotspots due to increased demand and usage.

NTUA is also awaiting the arrival of new materials and equipment to construct new towers in several communities. The latest Wi-Fi hotspot to go live is located at the Shiprock fairgrounds.

"Each day our crews are in the field knowing that their work is critical to help prevent the spread of the devastating COVID-19 virus," Haase said. "Our work is critically essential and our teams are working hard to meet the December deadline."

Overall, the Navajo Nation received over \$714 million in CARES Act funds: \$600 million on May 6, \$86 million on June 16, and \$27 million on June 18.

All the funds have been appropriated but tribal officials are examining the spending to determine if any funds should be redirected to the Hardship Assistance Program, which aims to provide \$1,500 to each tribal member and \$500 for minors.

## PEOPLE



General Manager Walter Haase

### NTUA's Haase receives award for Light Up Navajo

**FORT DEFIANCE** - Navajo Tribal Utility Authority on Tuesday announced that General Manager Walter Haase was recently named by Power Magazine as "creative problem solver" for the Light Up Navajo initiative.

Haase was presented the award for designing and initiating Light Up Navajo, the first-ever initiative that brought together 28 utilities from throughout the United States to help build and electrify homes on the Navajo Nation.

The problem: thousands of families living without electricity on the Navajo Nation. One solution: a mutual aid project called Light Up Navajo.

The first Light Up Navajo initiative brought workers from as far away as Massachusetts, Delaware, Arkansas, Texas and California.

The electrification project connected 233 Navajo homes to the electric grid under an expedited timeline in partnership with the American Public Power Association.

Haase said, "I'm very honored to receive this award which I share with NTUA employees, APPA, the Navajo Nation, and all those who helped in making this idea of Light Up Navajo become a reality.

"Everyone involved witnessed countless prayers being answered after electricity was extended to a home of a family who had been waiting for years," he said.

The Light Up Navajo project produced grateful tears from family members and unexpected emotions from visiting

electric linemen.

"There was one woman who had three kids," said Corey Hersman of the Ohio-based Painesville Municipal Electric. "She was in her 40s and never had electricity her whole life.

"When we got her connected she said she was going grocery shopping for a week now that she can keep the food cold," he said. "She got all teary-eyed and it got me all emotional. It was one of the best feelings I ever had in my life. It was amazing, absolutely amazing."

Light Up Navajo II was scheduled to get underway in May 2020 however the coronavirus pandemic changed those plans. NTUA is planning to re-launch the project when it is safe to do so.