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DISASTER RESPONSE AND MUTUAL AID

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Citing growing uncertainty tied to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority is postponing the Light Up Navajo II project. Light Up Navajo project, which was started in partnership with the American Public Power Association, is an effort that brought electricity to more than 220 families and included more than 120 volunteers from 25 public power organizations in 2019.

NTUA hoped that the second round of the project could start in May or possibly June. However, based on the nationwide health crisis, it was decided to postpone the 12-week project. The plans were to connect 300 families to the electric grid for the first time.

"It was not an easy decision to make," said NTUA General Manager Walter Haase. "Hundreds of Navajo families were hoping to have electricity in their homes for the very first time. After careful evaluation we have concluded it would be impossible for us to host Light Up Navajo II for the health, safety, and well-being of everyone involved," Haase said.

"We understand this postponement will be an enormous disappointment for the families," Haase said. "We are still weighing the best potential path forward, but we know postponing the project is the right decision based on the information we have today."

NTUA has notified the 38 utilities from 15 states that signed up for Light Up Navajo II, thanking them for signing up to help make a positive difference and improve the standard of life on the Navajo Nation. NTUA will also let the 300 families know about the decision to postpone the project.

"We will send word to the families and the same utilities once the worst of COVID19 is behind us," Haase said. "Once there is a new start date, we hope visiting crew members who registered will be ready to help build and ready to celebrate with Light Up Navajo II families."

"Our hearts go out to the Navajo people and the families hoping to receive electricity in their homes for the first time," said Joy Ditto, President and CEO of the American Public Power Association. "We look forward to participating in Light Up Navajo 2."

In August 2019, NTUA officials said the tribal enterprise would host another year of "Light Up Navajo" based on the outcome of the pilot project that successfully extended electricity to 233 families throughout the Navajo Nation in 2019.

Since then Light Up Navajo families have been enjoying basic modern conveniences like refrigerated food, heating, air conditioning, and televisions, NTUA noted.

This [infographic \(https://www.publicpower.org/periodical/article/lighting-navajo-nation\)](https://www.publicpower.org/periodical/article/lighting-navajo-nation) provides details on the first Light Up Navajo project.

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