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NTUA partners with APS for electric service connections to help combat the spread of COVID-19

FORT DEFIANCE, AZ – Navajo Tribal Utility Authority (NTUA) will be working with the Arizona Public Service (APS) company to extend electric services to approximately 8 homes in the Navajo communities of Tuba City and Cameron.

This electric connection collaboration is a result of NTUA’s current work with 2020 Navajo Nation CARES Act legislation and continued partnership with APS. NTUA received hundreds of applications from families requesting solar units from NTUA’s Off-Grid Residential Solar program. The families that applied do not have electricity. Many of the families live outside of NTUA’s electric distribution service area: in the western, eastern, northeastern parts of the Navajo Nation.

“NTUA has stepped up tremendously during the COVID-19 pandemic by expediting projects to bring electricity, water, and telecommunications access to our Navajo people,” said Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez. “I commend NTUA and APS for working together to further these efforts to help more communities. Through these types of united efforts, we will get through this pandemic together.”

Among the roughly 55,000 households located on the Navajo Nation, about 15,000 families do not have electricity. The high cost of connecting isolated rural households to the grid, the sensitivity of families to utility costs, and the limited availability of grant funding has created challenges in the way of electrification in the Navajo Nation.

NTUA is the primary electric service provider on the Navajo Nation. However, APS serves a western portion of the Navajo Nation. NTUA noticed among the CARES Act off-grid residential solar applicants, there are families living within the APS service territory requesting electricity and shared the information with APS. APS reviewed the information and indicated that its crews will be able to connect the families before the end of the year.

“The homes are beyond the reach of NTUA’s electric distribution system, but were in close proximity to APS’s electric distribution system, we reached out to APS to see how we could work together to get these families connected to a powerline,” said NTUA General Manager Walter Haase. “We worked together to create a meaningful solution to help these families get connected to APS’s electric system.”

In 2019, APS participated in NTUA's Light Up Navajo initiative, in which volunteer crews from 26 electric utilities across the country worked to connect more than 230 homes to electricity.

"Providing electrical service to these rural customers requires extensive collaboration, and we are committed to continuing this meaningful effort with our partners at NTUA," said Jeff Guldner, Chairman and CEO of Arizona Public Service. "CARES Act resources, combined with our line extension program, will connect these families to the many comforts and conveniences of reliable energy."

NTUA is coordinating meetings with APS, the General Land Development Department and the Heritage and Historic Preservation to expedite the land acquisition for electric construction. All entities have been fully engaged and are ready to help these families.

As part of APS's line extension program, the electric utility will cover up to \$10,000 of the cost of each connection. NTUA will pay the remaining cost of connecting the home and, if needed, will pay for the home to be house wired. NTUA will be requesting the support and approval of tribal leadership to apply CARES Act funding to this partnership.

"The CARES Act provides the opportunity to electrify homes to help combat the spread of COVID-19," Haase said. "We've already connected close to 300 families within NTUA's region. This partnership with APS extends the impact of the CARES Act funding and ensures more families throughout the Nation have access to reliable lighting, refrigeration, heating, and eventually other services such as running water and cellular/internet communications."