

# Utah Cities Join Project to Bring Power to the Navajo Nation

A pilot project aims to connect Navajo homes to the electric grid.

By Casey Leins Staff Writer

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**AT LEAST SIX** [Utah](#) cities will help bring electricity to the Navajo Nation Reservation this spring, after Murray, located just south of Salt Lake City, voted Tuesday to participate in an initiative to bring power to residents whose homes have never been connected to the electrical grid.

Under the pilot project, led by the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority and the American Public Power Association, volunteers will work with NTUA crews to bring electricity to 200 homes.

There are [15,000 families](#) without basic access to electricity in the Navajo Nation, the largest Native American tribe in the U.S. with a population of about 190,000 living on the reservation. According to a press release about the project, these 15,000 Navajo homes account for three-quarters of all unelectrified households in the nation.

Though the 200 homes the project aims to help only makes up a fraction of those without electricity, NTUA spokeswoman Deenise Becenti told [The Salt Lake Tribune](#) she hopes the pilot will establish a model for future work.

She said she thinks the Navajo nation was "overlooked" under the Rural Electrification Act of 1936, which allocated federal dollars to install electricity in remote parts of the country. Becenti added that families who gain electricity will be able to store fresh food in a refrigerator instead of having to keep it on ice in a cooler.

"The families that we have connected for the first time, that's basically the first statement that we hear from them is, 'Oh, now I can have fresh food,'" Becenti said.

On NTUA's [webpage](#) about the initiative, the organization asks people to imagine life without television, computers or cell phones.

The Utah cities – Heber, Lehi, St. George, Santa Clara and Washington – participating in the project will send crews to the reservation in the Four Corners region of southern Utah for a week each, starting at the beginning of April. According to the Tribune, other cities throughout the U.S. also plan to send volunteers.