



***Public Service Announcement from Shoshone Business Council
Vice-chair Karen Snyder***

April 22, 2020

Fort Washakie, WY-- Thank you for joining us today and thank you for staying home. I speak to you today on behalf of the Shoshone Business Council and for those of you who don't know me, I am Karen Snyder and currently serve as the Vice Chair for the Eastern Shoshone Tribe. First and foremost, the Eastern Shoshone Tribe sends our condolences to the families of those affected by the recent deaths on the Wind River Reservation due to the COVID 19.

We extend our hearts and sincere prayers to the Wheeler Family and the Northern Arapaho Tribe. As you all know, these are challenging times and there is no playbook on how to deal with a global pandemic combined with a shut down of the economy. Our goal today is to talk about some of the measures the Shoshone Business Council has taken and let our membership and all residents of our communities know we are very concerned and absolutely do not have all of the answers.

One message that we want to send loud and clear to all of the listeners today is that COVID 19 did not start on the Wind River Reservation-- our tribal members were exposed through an exposure outside of our borders. Please do not place blame or point fingers, as that is the type of divisive behavior that creates barriers. I am a firm believer in unity, collaboration and open, candid discussions and that is how we flatten the curve and work to overcome this crisis.

Further, the purpose of this video is to remind everyone that there is a Stay Home order in place for the Wind River Reservation and to better communicate the current status. There is also a curfew law that has always been in place for our youth. This curfew law from the Shoshone and Arapaho Law & Order Code also finds guardians and parents liable if youth do not follow the statute.

We apologize if individuals think we have not been transparent or forthcoming. Unfortunately, we are in a reactionary phase and as I already stated, there is no playbook. Currently and thus far, the steps being taken by SBC to combat COVID-19 are as follows:

On March 12, the SBC declared a State of Emergency and on March 31st, a resolution was passed through the Wind River Intertribal Council mandating a stay at home order for all residents of the WRIR. This process was taken one step further and confirmed through tribal court on April 1st, which states all residents of the WRIR are to follow the Stay at home order and violators may be subject to criminal or civil contempt.

These extreme measures were taken in order to provide Law Enforcement with a means to request people to stay home and to keep the numbers in our detention facilities at a minimum. As you know, the Coronavirus is spreading rapidly through our communities and we realize a large percentage of our population have other existing health conditions and it is so important to protect yourself and your families.

The SBC has been in contact with the Governor's office and our congressional delegates regarding the numerous COVID Relief packages being offered to tribes. We are hopeful to recoup a portion of the tribes' expenses and to maintain our tribal government during this challenging time. As you know, the majority of the tribes' revenue is from oil and gas royalties and these prices are down substantially, in fact yesterday, the market closed at a -\$37.00 for a barrel of oil. Oil producers are hurting and that means so are the tribes. As most of you probably know, the Eastern Shoshone Tribe's government is run by revenue from our oil and gas fields, that also is where our per capita revenue comes from. I do not want to instill panic in our membership but the economic turnaround for our tribes may not recover very quick so we need to be conservative and smart in our spending.

Our Finance Department is working diligently to make sure the SBC is making informed financial decisions and looking at all possible savings. The tribal health department has been boots on the ground since the onset of this epidemic and has been providing much needed supplies in order for employees who are at work with the proper protection and delivering care packages to as many people as they can reach. The tribal health department has been designated as the command center for the COVID 19 and are working closely with the Indian Health Service and the Wind River Cares Program to make sure we have facilities prepared for individuals who need self containment.

In collaboration with the Northern Arapaho Tribe, Wind River Cares and the Indian Health Service, strategies are currently being developed to test, trace and treat the COVID-19. We want to make sure we are all on the same page and that as many people that want to be tested are provided that opportunity, especially for our essential workers. Thank you to each and every health care worker.

Our Food Distribution Program and the Elderly Assistance Program have remained open and do the best they can to provide food to families and delivery of meals. The Food Distribution Program has applied for Emergency Food and will assist families who may have not been previously eligible.

The Shoshone Utilities Organization has remained open and continues to deliver propane as needed, we do ask that customers please plan ahead if you need propane.

The 477 Program is working hard to make sure TANF eligible clients are receiving their benefits and they will continue to look at increasing the TANF benefit once final guidelines are issued. Also, existing Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) recipients will be extended and the 477 program is accepting applications for new clients. If you have recently been laid off, you may be eligible for these services.

So for the hard work from these programs, I want to thank all of these employees who are now our front line and continue to provide much needed services.

This is the part of my message that I truly enjoy talking about, we have had a group of outstanding volunteers who provided wild game to many of our families. Approximately 700 packages of deer meat was distributed by this group and please keep in mind, their own vehicles were used to hunt, they provided their own gas money and did not receive compensation for any of their hard work and efforts. Also, the Eastern Shoshone Housing Authority purchased approximately 70 tons of potatoes from Fort Hall and those were also distributed by the same group of volunteers. This is the kind of spirit and teamwork we need to see in our time of need, put divisive thinking aside and see where we can lend a hand. The tribe is also looking at harvesting a couple of our buffalo and that meat hopefully will be available soon for distribution to our families.

On the law enforcement side, police officers nationwide are overwhelmed with COVID 19. Here in Wind River, we already knew we do not have enough law enforcement officers to maintain our 2.2 million acre land base and now to add a pandemic to that equation is a recipe for a very dangerous, serious time. The number of calls on drunk drivers, minors purchasing alcohol and being out past curfew has been on everybody's radar.

Please be assured, the Wind River Police Department is continuing to do their job by making daily arrests, working 12 hour shifts and trying to stay healthy, this in and of itself is an ominous task. So what can we do to help, hold your own family members accountable, know where the teengagers are at all times and talk to them in "a good way" about being unselfish, respectful and to look out for their elders and young siblings.

- Much is unknown about how coronavirus (COVID-19) spreads. We believe it spreads mostly from person to person through respiratory droplets produced when someone who is sick coughs or sneezes.

We recommend the wearing of cloth masks in public. These are also recommendations of the CDC and Fort Washakie IHS Health Center.

While wearing a mask in public you should still maintain 6-foot social-distancing and follow other rules in place by order of the Governor and the Tribes.

Anyone who is sick should stay home. These actions help prevent people from getting sick and help stop the spread of the virus.

If you attend services of any type, wear a mask.

If you were told to self-isolate, stay home and don't attend.

Take these measures to make sure vulnerable populations are protected.

It's important everyone practices frequent hand washing (hand hygiene) and social distancing (keep 6 feet of space or greater between people).

Remember to keep gatherings to 10 or fewer people.

Shoshone Tribal departments have been closed for over a month, some employees have been working remotely and others deemed essential employees are requested to be at their workplace to make sure crucial business of the tribe doesn't stop. This has not been a perfect process and we will try to do a better job of opening lines of communication and keeping our membership informed.

Shoshone tribal offices will remain closed for the month of April but our phone lines will open every Tuesday and Thursday from 9am to noon starting April 23. Call us at 332-3532.

- If you have a question for a tribal department or program, we will provide you with contact information.

Again-- Call 332-3532 Tuesdays and Thursday from 9 am to noon beginning this Thursday, April 23. Only a couple of us will be available to take phone calls as we continue to practice social distancing so please be patient with us.

Finally, we cannot tell you who to allow in your homes but please be cautious during this extremely vulnerable time. BE AWARE that you could be carrying the disease with absolutely no symptoms.

It is not the tribe's place to impose rules on attending sweats-- that is very much a personal, spiritual decision-- but we ask you to make conscious decisions. Stay home if you're feeling sick or if you were told by medical staff to self isolate. Please take these recommendations seriously.

Last, I must take this opportunity to bring your attention to a very dedicated, committed group of employees. Thank you to the staff of the Wind River Dialysis and Morning Star Care Center for your hard work and long hours at both of those facilities, we appreciate you.

I wish you all good health, well being and continued prayers. Thank you.