



# SOUTHERN UTE INDIAN TRIBE

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## FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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## **Southern Ute Indian Tribe provides status update on reopening plans**

**Southern Ute Indian Reservation, Colo.** – The Southern Ute Indian Tribe Incident Management Team (IMT) has been working hard over the last few weeks to develop reopening plans to implement a phased return to work for tribal employees. The IMT has continued to closely monitor national, regional, and local increases in demand to relax social distancing restrictions, closures, and modifications to work practices. We understand the pressure is rooted in concern over the emotional and economic toll caused by the pandemic. Individuals may have experienced frustration and even grief about the loss of opportunity to enjoy the “normal” activities of life. While we continue to take the utmost caution, it is important that we prepare for the “new normal,” beginning with plans to reopen when the health risks to the tribal membership and staff are drastically reduced.

Reopening plans are currently in draft form. A final plan will be approved before relaxation of any orders or work modifications could begin. There is no guaranteed timeline for this event, and the phased reopening is dependent on the status and spread of COVID-19. The planning process is a proactive preparation and no implementation schedule has been developed or approved.

Many state and local jurisdictions have made the decision to reopen and return to normal activity levels more quickly than the Southern Ute IMT and Southern Ute Indian Tribal Council. A disturbing trend has begun to emerge nationally over the last 2 weeks. More than half of states are experiencing significant increases in the number of new cases and hospitalizations due to COVID-19. It is well documented that Arizona is rapidly approaching a crisis level in both those metrics, setting records for new cases almost daily. In the last week, both Colorado and New Mexico have shown increases in new cases as compared to the previous week. The United States, as a whole, has continued to see a rise in new cases.

Neither Tribal Council, nor the IMT, can ignore these trends; therefore, we must reiterate the tribal “Stay at Home” Order is still in effect until further notice. The highest priority of Tribal Council and the Southern Ute IMT is the health and welfare of tribal members and staff. The Tribe is quite fortunate to have avoided the virus and its effects, both known and unknown, unlike individuals who reside in San Juan County, NM or on the Navajo Nation. A few hastily

made decisions could potentially have a devastating impact to the Tribe in a matter of days, or weeks. The Southern Ute IMT has been scrutinizing both national and regional trends in new cases and hospitalizations, which appear to be correlated with reopening too early and failing to maintain safe hygiene practices and expectations for social distancing and appropriate face mask use.

Both the Tribal Council and IMT would hope the tribal membership and staff enjoy the upcoming holiday, but must emphasize that everyone do so safely. Please wear face masks in public. Wash and sanitize your hands frequently. Avoid group activities. Stay at home when possible. Maintain social distance of at least six feet when you must go out. Please remember we all play a part in the overall safety of others.

The Southern Ute IMT has, and will continue to collect, organize, and evaluate all pertinent data on a daily basis to make safe and informed decisions. When the data clearly shows that we can relax the “Stay at Home” Order and implement an approved return to work program safely, we will clearly communicate any reopening plan and then execute said plan with prowess. The Southern Ute IMT will also announce notable changes in the Tribe’s position on reopening and any other important COVID-19 information. Please continue to observe the tribal websites, Southern Ute Drum website, tribal social media and listen to KSUT Tribal Radio for updated information.

If you have questions related to COVID-19 or modified tribal operations, please call the Southern Ute Indian Tribe’s COVID-19 Call Center at 970.563.0214. The Call Center is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. The Call Center will be closed Friday, July 3, 2020 in observance of the Independence Day holiday.

If you are sick, self-isolate. If your symptoms worsen call your healthcare provider. Tribal members and Southern Ute Health Center patients can call the Health Center at 970.563.4581 to schedule an appointment. Walk-ins will not be permitted for the health and safety of patients and staff. Please first call to schedule your appointment and then call upon your arrival.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation during these challenging times. Please remain safe.

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