

NAVAJO WATER PROJECT

COVID-19 Water Deliveries Fact Sheet

As the COVID-19 pandemic hit and shelter-in-place orders were enacted, many people across Navajo Nation without piped water connections had to balance the need for water with the need to protect themselves and their families from disease.

In response, DigDeep began providing temporary, emergency water delivery services to households within or near our existing program areas, to reduce gatherings at public water points, and to improve access to handwashing and cleanliness at such a critical time. Meanwhile, DigDeep has been working within the [Water Access Coordination Group](#) (WAC-G) to improve access to safe drinking water by identifying and rehabilitating public water access points and sharing location information across the entire Navajo Nation.

Who does DigDeep deliver water to?

When the pandemic hit, DigDeep was primarily servicing our 300+ off grid [Home Water Systems](#) utilizing a network of water trucks and water access points run by DigDeep and our nonprofit / Chapter (local government) partners.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we temporarily *expanded* our delivery routes to families without piped water connections, by putting ten new delivery vehicles into service and expanding our footprint by more than 1800 sq. miles. These families were identified through partnerships with local Community Health Representatives (CHRs) at the Navajo Department of Health.

At each dwelling we installed a contactless, 275-gallon water storage tank outside the home along with written instructions on keeping the tank clean and sanitary for long-term use. Clients own their water tanks permanently and may continue to use them for water hauling and storage, and are responsible for maintaining their safety and cleanliness.

Our emergency water deliveries serve those who have the most difficulty accessing water themselves, including elderly people, people with chronic disease and disabilities, etc. DigDeep does not charge for this water. Clients were notified that this is a temporary, emergency service that will eventually phase-out as the pandemic comes under control.

What is this water for?

Recognizing that clean drinking water is a precious resource, especially in the hot summer months, DigDeep only provides emergency water for human consumption (drinking, cooking, and bathing). We do not provide water for animals/livestock, plants, or household purposes, although we do recognize that these additional needs are also important and must be met long-term.

Where does this water come from?

DigDeep utilizes a combination of water sources, including wells owned by DigDeep (drilled in partnership with local communities and Chapters), wells owned and operated by partner organizations, Chapter-owned wells, and NTUA public watering points. All water sources produce drinking water that meets EPA standards and are regulated by state or Tribal drinking water agencies, depending on their location. Some locations charge us for the water we deliver to clients; at others we can access a certain amount for free.

DigDeep recognizes the importance of utilizing as many safe, sustainable water resources as are available to ensure service reliability, especially since seasonal droughts and freezing temperatures often reduce the number of available sources. We work alongside system operators and community leaders to protect existing resources and use them sustainably.

Who do we coordinate with?

DigDeep coordinates our program activities, including emergency water delivery, with a number of Tribal entities, including Office of the President and Vice President (OPVP), Navajo Nation Department of Health, Navajo Tribal Utility Authority, Indian Health Service, Department of Water Resources, Chapter leadership, and others as appropriate. We do this to ensure that our work supports the great work being done by Tribal entities.

What is the long-term plan for emergency water deliveries?

DigDeep is a human rights organization focused on providing clean, running water forever. Emergency deliveries are just [one way we're working to provide relief during COVID-19](#).

As the pandemic comes under control, we will shift our focus back to long-term projects: installing permanent off-grid Home Water Systems, piped water connections, onsite wastewater, etc. We are excited to provide this higher level of service, while safeguarding the health and safety of our clients and staff. Although this will mean that some of our short-term COVID-response activities (including emergency water deliveries) must end, we will continue to grow our work until every American has permanent access to safe, clean hot-and-cold running water and a flush toilet at home.

[LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR COVID RESPONSE ON NAVAJO NATION](#)