



TOHONO O'ODHAM NATION
OFFICE OF THE
CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN

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O'ODHAM HA-WE:HEJED
"For the People"



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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UPDATE ON EVACUATIONS AND FLOODING ON TOHONO O'ODHAM NATION

SELLS, Ariz. – Efforts continue to assist displaced members of the Tohono O'odham Nation. The communities of Meneger's Dam in Pima County and Kohatk Village in Pinal County were forced to evacuate overnight. Evacuation efforts were led by the Tohono O'odham Police Department, with support from multiple Nation agencies, a U.S. Customs and Border Protection BORSTAR team, and a Pima County Sheriff's Office swift water rescue team.

In Kohatk, 32 residents were evacuated. In Meneger's Dam, a community of over 100 individuals, 23 residents were provided assistance in evacuating and the rest left in their own vehicles, with a few refusing to leave. Evacuees have been transported to shelter locations in Sells.

Tohono O'odham Nation Chairman Edward Manuel said *"Due to extraordinary efforts by the Nation's Department of Public Safety and Office of Emergency Management, we have been able to avoid any casualties so far. Shelter services for more than 100 people are being provided with help from volunteers and the Red Cross. We want to thank all those who have provided assistance so far, but with additional rains forecast for coming days we still have additional challenges."*

The integrity of Meneger's Dam on the Nation remains a major concern. Although the water level has decreased somewhat, the status of the earthen embankment continues to be in question, with more rain forecasted for the end of the week. The Nation is coordinating efforts to assemble an engineering team to inspect the dam, which is in a remote area. For the time being, residents and the general public are strongly advised to stay away from the Meneger's Dam area due to the potential for imminent danger.

The Nation's Department of Public Safety, in coordination with CBP, has conducted an aerial reconnaissance flight to provide a preliminary assessment of impacts to the communities and infrastructure. Attached are photographs from the aerial survey showing the flooding.

The Nation has declared a state of emergency.

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Editor's Note: All photos and video are credit Richard Saunders, Tohono O'odham Nation Director of Public Safety.

- Image 1 shows Meneger's Dam Lake. At the center of the image is the earthen embankment of the dam; just beyond the embankment the community of Meneger's Dam can be seen.

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- Image 2 shows the earthen embankment of the dam, where the water levels remain high.
- Image 3 shows Kohakt Village, the saturation in the ground indicating where water had flooded.
- Video of the flood damage to Kohakt Village can be seen here:
<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/q5g5hbt3r96wt3d/AABMR-u8lzcKsd5QPHOWv2Rga?dl=0>





