Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

Media Contact: Nedra Darling, OPA-IA Phone: 202-219-4152
For Immediate Release: May 12, 2005
Print PDF

WASHINGTON – Department of the Interior Associate Deputy Secretary Jim Cason today announced a partnership effort involving the Bureau of Indian Affairs, South Dakota Senator John Thune, South Dakota Governor Mike Rounds, and Crow Creek Sioux Tribal Chairman Duane Big Eagle involving an initiative to address the devastating effects of a fire in the Crow Creek school dormitory in Fort Thompson, South Dakota on Sunday, April 24, 2005.

Associate Deputy Secretary Cason said that Interior Secretary Gale Norton, Senator Thune, Governor Rounds, and Chairman Big Eagle have aggressively developed a strategy for an expeditious response to the fire.

“I am impressed by the cooperative efforts that have gone into crafting this response,” said Secretary Norton. “While we cannot undo the devastating fire, we can, through coordinating our efforts, mitigate its effects on students and help Crow Creek resume its educational mission later this year.”

The fire damaged the dormitory, kitchen and dining area, miscellaneous offices, and displaced more than 100 dormitory residents for the balance of this school year. The fire did not affect the separate classroom buildings and classes continued for the more than 400 students enrolled at the school.

Mr. Cason announced that the Department of the Interior will contribute up to $1.3 million in repair and recovery assistance to the Tribe. The funds will be used to provide a modular pre-engineered kitchen and dining facility and temporary dormitory space for the opening of the 2005-2006 school year.

Governor Rounds also plans to provide financial and technical support for mitigating environmental issues associated with the fire, along with other temporary facilities to replace destroyed operations space.

The Crow Creek School is currently ranked ninth on the Bureau of Indian Affairs list of fourteen schools scheduled for replacement over the next few years. The school is among 184 that serve Indian students across the nation.