Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Because of fire safety hazards involved in student dormitories, the Bureau of Indian Affairs is taking action immediately to close its 500-pupil school at Fort Defiance, Arizona, on the Navajo Reservation, the Department of the Interior announced today.

Arrangements will be made so that all of the presently enrolled students can finish the current term either by transferring to other reservation schools immediately, or by taking summer school instruction. Plans are also being made to place all of them in other school facilities for the new term which starts next fall.

The decision to close the Fort Defiance school was made by Commissioner of Indian Affairs Glenn L. Emmons after consideration of alternatives, and consultation with Navajo Tribal Chairman Paul Jones. Mr. Jones, now in Washington on tribal business, concurred in the decision.

The students at Fort Defiance include both boys and girls enrolled in grades from the beginners through the fourth. Practically all are Navajo Indian children.

The dormitories which have been found unsafe for further occupancy are approximately 50 years old.