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The Navajo Indian Tribe and the Bureau of Indian Affairs of the Department of the Interior are working closely together to meet all emergency needs resulting from the recent heavy snows and extremely cold weather on the Navajo Reservation in Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah, Commissioner of Indian Affairs Philleo Nash reported today.

"One of the most important jobs," Commissioner Nash said, "has been to keep the roads open. For the past several days the Bureau has had its road maintenance crews in the Navajo area working on a round-the-clock schedule. Our latest reports indicate that all main roads on the reservation have been kept open up to the present moment.

"To meet the needs of Navajo families who live away from the main roads, the Tribe has arranged, if it proves necessary, to drop from planes furnished by the National Guard organizations of Arizona and New Mexico about 300 packages of food and 700 bales of hay at some of the more isolated spots on the reservation. While weather conditions have temporarily delayed these emergency flights, they are expected to begin momentarily. Thirty thousand dollars of tribal funds has been appropriated for this undertaking. In addition, there is hay in storage at warehouses scattered across the vast reservation area embracing 25,000 square miles. Stocks of clothing and medical supplies already on hand throughout the reservation are apparently sufficient to meet any foreseeable emergencies."

The situation today, Mr. Nash added, contrasts sharply with that in 1948 when severe blizzards and Widespread suffering on the Navajo Reservation attracted nationwide attention.

"Although the recent snows and subzero temperatures have been perhaps even more severe in some spots than those of 13 years ago, we are now far better equipped to meet the human needs. The network of roads crossing the reservation is much better and more extensive. The Tribe has far more ample funds of its own for coping with such emergencies and a much larger and more efficient organization for the purpose. And all of us, of course, have learned a great deal from the 1948 experience.

"Snow began falling in the Navajo area on Friday, December 8, and has accumulated about six inches everywhere and as much as 30 inches in the higher elevations. High winds and temperatures running as low as 24 degrees below zero have contributed to the emergency conditions.

"I wish to congratulate the officers of the Navajo Tribe, the State governments concerned and the employees of the Bureau of Indian Affairs who have worked and planned with determination and foresight to meet every human and livestock need on the reservation during this snow emergency."