



The Navajo Nation
Yideeskáadi Nitsáhákees

DR. BUU NYGREN *PRESIDENT*
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Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety, Page Police Dept. clarify Mutual Aid Agreement after overwhelming response

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Good news travels fast when people hear of improved police services.

However, some recent good news is not exactly what some think it is.

When Navajo Nation residents heard about it, many began to call or arrive at the Page Police Dept. to request police reports, assistance and services that go beyond the intention of the agreement.



Navajo Nation Deputy Police Chief Ron Silversmith and Page Police Chief Tim Lange discuss options with Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety Director Michael Anderson to address an influx of requests to Page since Navajo President Buu Nygren and Page Mayor Bill Diak signed a Mutual Aid Agreement.

On Thursday, Page Police Chief Tim Lange traveled to Window Rock to discuss options with Michael Anderson, executive director of the Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety, and Navajo Police Deputy Chief Ron Silversmith.

“We’re all so shorthanded,” Chief Lange said. “But we’re going to always be cooperative within each other’s jurisdiction. If they need us, that’s the purpose of the agreement.”

Deputy Chief Silversmith said Mutual Aid Agreements are developed to cover each law enforcement agency in the event of civil unrest, when enforcement assistance is needed, when highway accidents require more traffic control or when emergency services are sought.

“There has been a general misunderstanding that when the Navajo Nation enters into these agreements, it’s thought outside law enforcement agencies will become the primary law enforcement service provider to various Navajo communities,” he said. “That is not precise.”

On March 8, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren and Page, Ariz., Mayor Bill Diak signed a 10-year Mutual Aid Agreement for the Navajo and Page police departments to assist one another during emergencies and special events.



Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren and Page, Ariz., Mayor Bill Diak meet again to sign a 10-year Mutual Aid Agreement for the Navajo and Page police departments to assist one another in emergencies.

The agreement signed by President Nygren and Mayor Diak ensures the safety of Navajo police officers when there is minimal or no backup available, Anderson said.

Similarly, Navajo police could be asked to assist the Page police officers in similar situations.

“Our hope is that we’ll have the ability to continue to work with not only the City of Page but the other forty-plus agencies with Mutual Aid Agreements,” Anderson said.

Police officers and departments know each other and work together, Director Anderson said.

“But when Navajo residents need assistance or have an incident to report, they still should contact their local Navajo police districts,” he said.

Chief Lange and Director Anderson’s relationship goes back years when Lange was a new officer with the Navajo Police Dept. and Anderson was a Arizona State Highway Patrol officer.

Lange remembered being a rookie officer and learning of Anderson’s willingness to work with other agencies. It was when Anderson helped him during his first highway fatality traffic accident.

Although city and county law enforcement agencies are cross-commissioned as Navajo peace officers through these kinds of agreements, Deputy Chief Silversmith said, they are not primary responders to incidents that happen on the Navajo Nation.

“They have authority to provide or render aid or assistance when called upon by Navajo police, and Navajo peace officers have the same authority under a particular state’s peace officer commission and certification,” he said.

Both police departments need more officers, Anderson said. He and Chief Lange said their departments would like to hire civilian staff who could process arrests, bookings and evidence so police officers can use their time on patrol and reduce overtime expenses for their departments.



Navajo Division of Public Safety Director Michael Anderson

“Initiatives by Dr. Nygren promote recruiting more DPS personnel,” he said. “I would like to have two police academy recruits from each of the 110 Navajo chapters. If half of them were successful through the academy, we’d be well on our way to staffing our police force as it should be for the protection and safety of Navajo citizens.”

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