STATE-TRIBAL RELATIONS IC
SEPTEMEBER 7, 2012
Exhibit 1

Statement by Mr. Ed Joine.
Northern Cheyenne Tribal Coordinator, Disaster & Emergency Services
August 30, 2012

In response to your questions as to documentation of our fires on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation this year we have no official reports so I will try and give a brief over view of our fire season so far this year.

Our wild land fires are handled by the Northern Cheyenne Fire and Aviation department. This is under the BIA and not the Tribe. Typically I believe they are capable of having several crews available, and up to 6 engines ready for initial attack. They also have the capabilities of requesting air support through DNRC I believe. Our Tribal volunteer fire department has two structure engines available in Lame Deer, and one in Busby. These are also available upon request from Fire and Aviation for structure protection.

A lightning storm started the Ash Creek Fire on June 24th I believe. There were crews working the fire on Monday the 25th. This continued through June 26th when the fire blew up and spread very rapidly due to winds and low humidity. We had a breakdown in communication between the wild land fire people and Tribal departments as to the severity of the spreading fire. On a typical situation like this there would be a request for structure protection. At this time we would help make the decision for possible evacuations. The request for structure protection never happened and we found residents scrambling to get out of the area just a head of the fire.

I happened to be over there at the time this was happening to get a first hand view of the situation. We did have one accident on the road which was handled well, but it was a pretty chaotic situation. Part of the problem at this time was that power had been cut off due to burnt power poles. This made our emergency repeaters shut down, so our radios couldn't reach each other to communicat6e. This will continue to be a major problem for us as we have no cell phone service. Our radio site has no backup power system and has been over looked for years.

I made a call on my cell phone from Ashland where they do have service to open up two shelters as they were evacuating Ashland and the surrounding areas. We had around 450 people in two shelters that night. They were allowed to go back the next day but we still had over 250 for the next few days at a shelter managed by the Red Cross the next day. Even though we had 250 at the shelter they were feeding over 800 people at times. This was due to the fact that our power was still out for a few days and some had no food, spoiled food and no way to cook it. Also we had no way to get gas to people so they could travel and get their needs taken care of. Our boy's and girl's club fed until Red Cross showed up and their efforts were very commendable. We were fortunate as the Red Cross and Salvation Army had no problem feeding any of those that showed up. Some people stayed in the shelter until the smoke dwindled out as they had respiratory problems.

I feel we were very fortunate we had no fatalities with this fire as fast as it was moving and the way the people had to leave fast. We did qualify for help through FEMA with the Presidential declaration. We are eligible for up towards $400,000 to help with our fencing damages and replacement. Our Northern Cheyenne Housing Authority did an excellent job in my opinion getting occupants of all the 19 homes that burned placed and helped in their transition. Some are already living in FEMA trailers and some are placed in homes while they rebuild. We were also eligible for SBA loans, but there was not much interest in that as they were loans.

Our other big fire, the Chaulky Fire was another 150,000 acre fire that quickly blew up and forced many evacuations. Ironically the day this fire blew up we were discussing the possibilities of a fire to the west of us jumping the containment lines and having to evacuate residents in the Busby area. We had Red Cross ready and handed out pre-evacuation notices over there. Within the next few hours it was apparent the fire we had north of the reservation that morning was quickly bearing down on us in Lame Deer. This time there was structure protection requested and we had already talked to some of the residents.

Red Cross was contacted and instructed to set up in Ashland to their surprise but that went well. It was staffed by the St. Labre workers until Red Cross got there that night. As the fire grew and was headed towards town many homes were being evacuated and being protected. It was soon apparent we would have to evacuate the town of Lame Deer. Some were in direct danger and some due to the health threat of the smoke. Our elderly center is located on the north end of town and they have no means of transportation and some are in wheel chairs. We always talked about if we had to evac them but it went off like clockwork. We had a bus there within 10 minutes and they were loading up. The handicapped were transported by van and some by family members. We also had buses going through the streets of Lame Deer offering rides to the shelter. The shelter was only open for that evening as the smoke and main threat had passed. The next day we actually received some rain and we thought the main threat was over, but the fire took off again the next day but was headed away from town.

With the power on our problems were minimal. Also we were already planning the evacuation process, just for a different town! Both fires were turned over to Type ll teams which were handled very professionally. And with the added resources we felt very confident and the fires were quickly laid to rest. We are now still under very dangerous fire conditions, with just our local resources available. Also we are in a drought period and we lost a lot of grassland due to the fires so the effects are going to be long lasting.

A problem we were and are having is livestock wondering looking for grass. They have broken through fences, and some have fencing that has been burnt. We have had a few accidents with livestock these past few weeks.