



## NIEHS WORKER TRAINING PROGRAM

# Building Capacity with Native Americans and Alaska Natives to Handle Hazardous Materials and Respond to Emergencies



## About the NIEHS Worker Training Program

The [NIEHS Worker Training Program \(WTP\)](#) funds nonprofit organizations to provide health and safety training for workers who may be exposed to hazardous materials and waste at work or while assisting with emergency response. The NIEHS WTP was initiated under the Hazardous Substance Basic Research and Training Program authorized by the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act of 1986 (42 USC 9660).

Under these NIEHS Superfund-related activities, WTP grantees provide trainings across the country through the [Hazardous Waste, HazMat Disaster](#), and [Environmental Career Worker Training Programs](#).

For more information on the NIEHS WTP, visit [www.niehs.nih.gov/wtp](http://www.niehs.nih.gov/wtp).

**COVER:** The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe received 40-hour HAZWOPER training in Akwesasne, NY. (Photo courtesy of Alabama Fire College)

# Building Capacity with Native Americans and Alaska Natives to Handle Hazardous Materials and Respond to Emergencies

The NIEHS Worker Training Program (WTP) funds health and safety training for Native American tribal workers and communities across the U.S. These training efforts protect workers, improve emergency and disaster response, increase employment opportunities, and build capacity in Native American communities.

During the 2017 program year, WTP grantees trained more than 1,500 Native Americans and Alaska Natives, delivering more than 60 courses and nearly 13,000 contact hours. During this period, more than 20 types of courses were offered to tribal workers, including:

- Basic Superfund Site Worker and Site Worker Refresher
- Hazardous Materials (HazMat) Transportation
- Clandestine Methamphetamine (Meth) Lab Awareness
- Hazardous Waste Operations
- Emergency Response and Preparedness
- HazMat Air Monitoring
- General Construction Safety
- Mass Casualty Incident Triage
- Hazard Communication
- Process Safety Management
- Radiation and Nuclear Awareness
- Training Methods/Trainer Development

## Understanding the Need for Training

Tribal nations across the U.S. are [self-governing entities](#), operating their own solid and hazardous waste programs, utility systems, and law enforcement agencies. However, many tribal communities are located in rural and remote areas with underdeveloped infrastructure and high rates of poverty, thereby lacking the means to provide adequate training in environmental or occupational health and safety compared to other parts of the country.

Additionally, many tribal communities face unique hazards due to local contaminated sites. For example, many Superfund sites needing remediation are located on or near tribal lands. Additionally, tribal communities contend with contamination and hazardous conditions from oil and natural gas exploration, as well as meth lab sites.

WTP is providing training to help tribal communities overcome these challenges. Through WTP grantee-led trainings, tribal workers have gained skills and knowledge to safely handle hazardous materials and respond to emergencies and disasters.

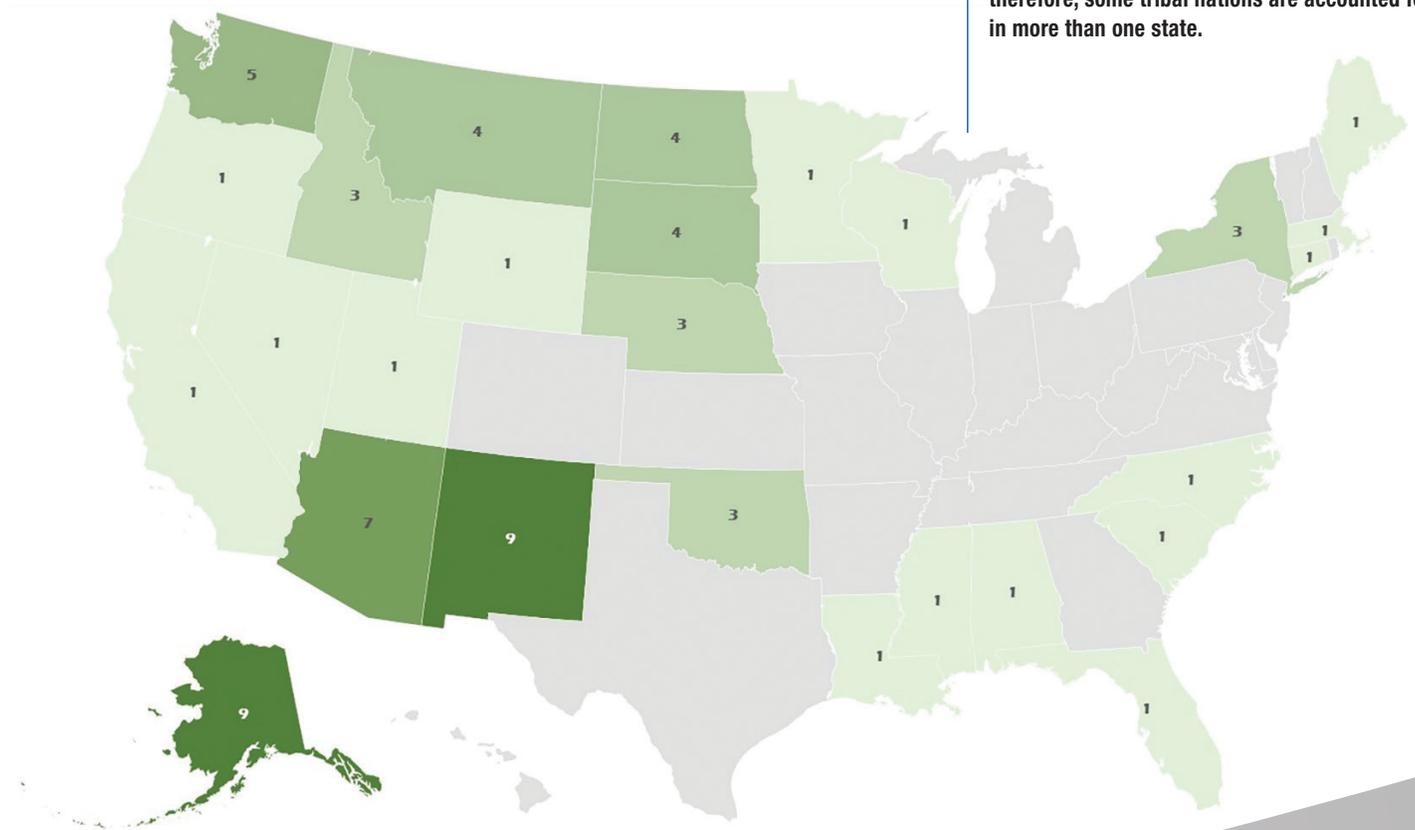
# Tribes and Alaska Native Villages Reached

In program years 2015 through 2017, WTP provided training to 101 Native American tribal nations or Alaska Native Villages in 27 states. Training efforts have reached these populations in all U.S. Department of Health and Human Services regions. Figure 1 shows the number of tribes and Alaska Native Corporations\* reached in each state. States that have seen the highest number of tribes or Alaska Native Corporations reached through training include Alaska, Arizona, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Washington. Figure 2 shows the geographic spread of trainees across Alaska, including 44 Alaska Native Villages under 9 Alaska Native Corporations.

A full list of tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, and Alaska Native Villages that received training in program years 2015 through 2017 is available at the end of this document.

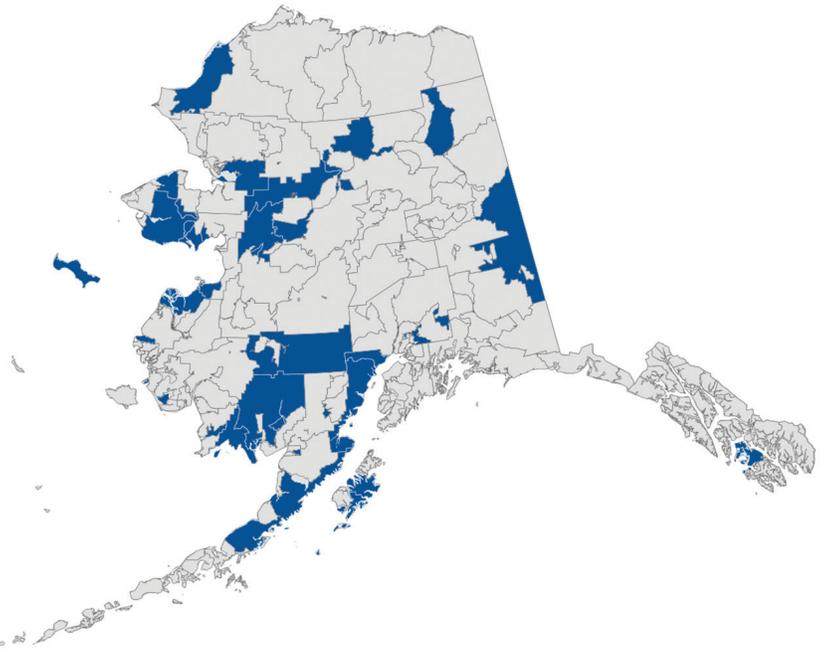
**Figure 1. Tribal Nations and Alaska Native Corporations Reached Through NIEHS WTP Training in the U.S. (2015 – 2017 Program Years)**

This map displays the number of tribal nations and Alaska Native Corporations reached within the U.S. It is important to note that tribal nation boundaries extend beyond state boundaries; therefore, some tribal nations are accounted for in more than one state.



\*There are 13 Alaska Native Corporations (ANCs), which were organized under the laws of the State of Alaska in accordance with the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, as amended (43 U.S.C. 1601, et seq.) Alaska Native Villages and Communities are found within these ANCs. See the **Alaska Department of Natural Resources**.

**Figure 2. Zip Codes in Alaska Represented by Alaska Native Trainees of the NIEHS WTP (2015 – 2017 Program Years)**



This map shows the zip codes represented by Alaska Native trainees during WTP program years 2015 through 2017, including 44 Alaska Native Villages and tribes in which WTP trainees reside.

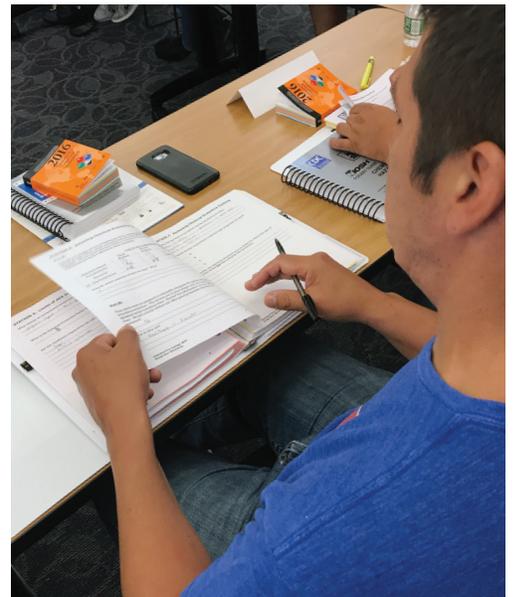
In July 2017, 40-hour HAZWOPER training was provided in Akwesasne, NY for the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe. (Photo courtesy of Alabama Fire College)



A member of the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation in Poplar, MT practices putting on a HazMat suit. (Photo courtesy of Alabama Fire College)



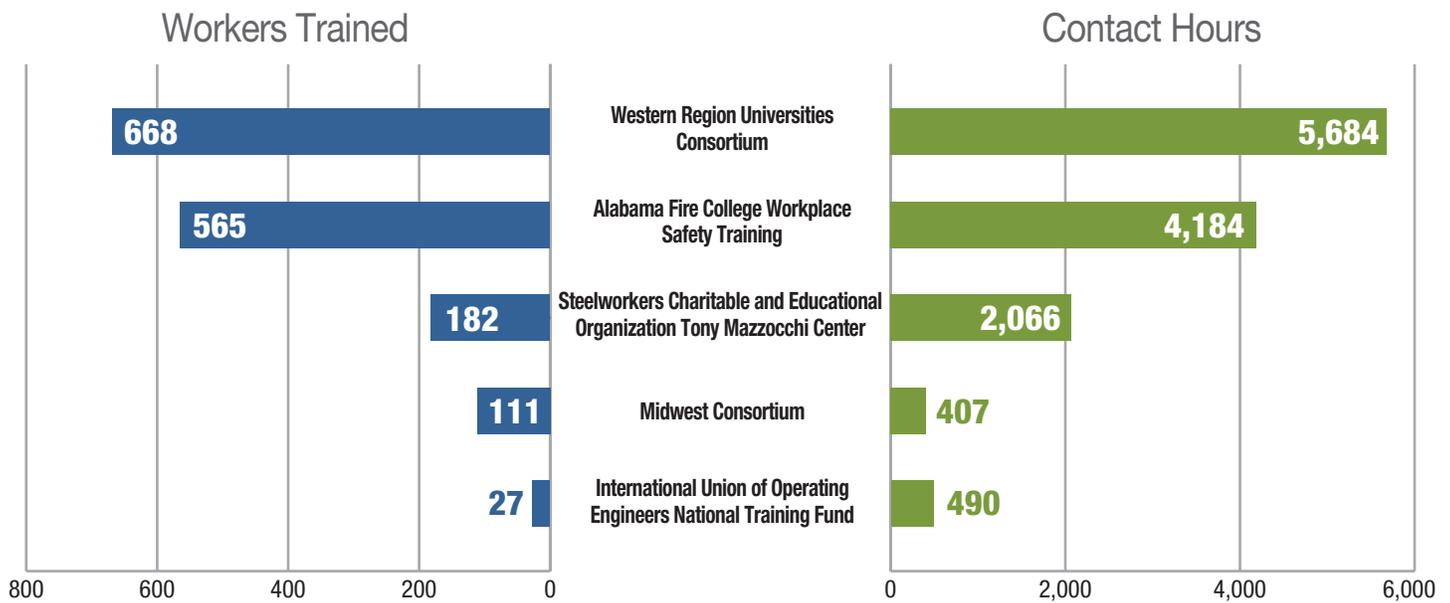
Members of the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe learn to handle HazMat incidents using the Emergency Response Guidebook. (Photo courtesy of Alabama Fire College)



## Awardee Training Highlights

The following examples highlight training accomplishments by NIEHS WTP grantees who have specific programs and partnerships focused on training Native Americans and Alaska Natives. Figure 3 shows the number of workers trained and contact hours achieved for each of these grantees in program year 2017.

**Figure 3.** This chart shows the number of Native American and Alaska Native workers trained during the NIEHS WTP 2017 program year by grantee. The five grantees with specific programs and partnerships focused on training tribal members are shown.



### Nationwide Training: Building Capacity for Native Americans in Hazardous Chemical Safety and Awareness

The Alabama Fire College Workplace Safety Training (AFC WST) program delivers training to Native American tribes focusing on emergency response, disaster preparedness, and incident command. To address the lack of training surrounding meth lab hazards, AFC WST has also developed training materials for a course focused on safe practices, laws, and regulations for meth lab cleanup.

Partnerships with external organizations have enabled AFC WST to gain a broad reach. By working with the [Native American Fish and Wildlife Society](#) and [United South and Eastern Tribes](#), AFC WST connects with tribal members across the country for training, such as those employed by law enforcement, emergency medical services, fire service, natural resource, and public works agencies. Additionally, Native American trainees learn how to pass on knowledge and training methods to others in their tribe through WST's peer training courses.



Training for Reno Sparks Indian Colony. (Photo courtesy of Alabama Fire College)

During the 2017 program year, AFC WST provided training to 23 tribes in 15 states. These trainings have reached Native American tribes in all U.S. regions. Some examples of the trainees reached by AFC WST include:

- **Alabama**—Trainees represent the Poarch Band of Creeks, a tribe AFC WST has been working with for two decades. The training has focused on incident command and HazMat. When Hurricane Katrina hit, the training gave them the capacity to respond within their own tribe, as well as to coordinate activities for nearby tribes along the coast. The tribe is now a strong regional responder for HazMat incidents.
- **New Mexico**—Trainees in New Mexico represent nine tribes, including the Navajo Nation, the Mescalero Apache Tribe, and seven Pueblos. Training has focused on emergency response, such as Mass Casualty Incident Triage, and responding to meth labs.
- **New York**—Trainees represent the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe, a tribe with which AFC WST maintains a direct partnership. The tribe is closely connected to the surrounding community, so the 40-hour Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER), HazMat Technician Class, and emergency response trainings benefit both the tribe and local non-tribal residents.
- **Mississippi**—Trainees in Mississippi represent the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, who have participated in emergency response and hazard awareness training. Tribal conservation officers, emergency responders, and the housing authority have benefited from this training.
- **Montana**—During the 2015 program year, AFC WST offered a 40-hour HAZWOPER training reaching the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation. Other tribes reached included the Blackfeet and the Crow Nation of Montana.

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## Alaska: Providing Job Training for Alaska Natives and Rural Villages

Many worker health and safety challenges are particularly acute in Alaska. Transportation and infrastructure costs make certain safety practices, like hauling of dangerous waste out of the region, cost-prohibitive and hazardous. To help address these challenges, the Western Region Universities Consortium (WRUC) provides a variety of courses to tribes in Alaska through consortia member University of Washington (UW). UW has provided training to [the Tribal Solid Waste Advisory Network](#), a non-profit organization of 34 tribes focused on solid waste management on reservations and in tribal communities. UW also works with three local organizations to provide training.

- **Zender Environmental**— UW partners with Zender Environmental to facilitate a program that provides environmental training and employment for unemployed residents in remote Alaska Native Villages impacted by environmental health issues. Since 2014, UW has provided key training courses for the program, such as 40-hour HAZWOPER, general construction safety, confined space, and first aid and CPR courses.
- **Kawerak, Inc.**—UW provides onsite environmental and construction training for Kawerak, Inc., a nonprofit organization that provides services throughout the Bering Straits region. Because of the remoteness of the native villages, workers have very limited access to health and safety training. For many, this partnership offers training opportunities that might not otherwise be offered in their village.
- **Bristol Bay Native Corporation**—UW provides health and safety training for village residents competing for jobs on native land. Historically, these jobs have been filled by workers transported by plane from other regions of Alaska and other states.



**Tribal members attended a HAZWOPER training provided by the University of Washington. (Photo courtesy of Western Region Universities Consortium)**

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## Arizona and New Mexico: Collaborating with the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the Southwest

Arizona State University (ASU), also part of WRUC, offers courses to Native Americans in New Mexico and Arizona as part of a program coordinated with the U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), through the Navajo Region Division of Environmental and Safety Management. ASU is the only provider of HAZWOPER training, as well as other key hazardous materials courses, for BIA in this region. In 2017, ASU trained 467 Native American workers in 20 courses for the BIA. Other courses provided included Pollution Prevention and Hazard Communication.

ASU courses include attendees from multiple Southwest tribes. The majority are Navajo since the three main training sites (Tuba City, AZ, Chinle, AZ, and Gallup, NM) are located in the heart of the Navajo Nation. Trainees also come from the White Mountain Apache Tribe in eastern Arizona and the Hopi tribe in Northeastern Arizona. Other tribes represented include the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, the Yavapai-Prescott Indian Tribe, and the Gila River Indian Community. Due to the university's location in central Arizona, many BIA personnel also attend ASU's open-enrollment classes.

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## North Dakota: Advancing Emergency Preparedness for Tribes

For nearly 20 years, WTP awardee the Midwest Consortium has offered training through their consortia members to the Three Affiliated Tribes in North Dakota, preparing tribal members to act in case of an emergency. Three Affiliated Tribes – a single organization comprised of members of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nations – is located on the Fort Berthold Reservation, which lies at the heart of the massive Bakken oil fields.



Members of the Tulalip Tribes of the Washington State learn to use respirators. (Photo courtesy of University of Washington)

Natural gas products from the Bakken oil fields are constantly moving in and out of the reservation via trucks, railways, and pipelines. As a result, tribal workers and residents on the reservation face safety hazards, including spills, tank ruptures, derailments, as well as serious health risks due to air pollution from heavy truck traffic, pipeline leaks, fires, and explosions.

To prevent or mitigate these risks, members of the Three Affiliated Tribes delivered eight courses to 111 trainees, totaling 407 contact hours, during the 2017 program year. They also developed 16-hour and 2-hour preparedness programs focused on responding to high-volume fuel transport incidents.

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## Washington: Improving Tribal Capacity for Superfund Cleanup

The International Union of Operating Engineers National Training Fund (NTF) provides training to workers and members of the Spokane Indian Tribe to protect themselves from exposure to hazardous materials during cleanup activities at the Midnite Mine Superfund site in Washington State, which is located within the Spokane Indian Reservation. After 30 years of uranium mining activities, 2.4 million tons of stockpiled ore and 33 million tons of waste rock remain at the site, which poses a [potential threat to health and the environment](#).

The NTF efforts ensure that Spokane tribal members receive HAZWOPER and OSHA Construction Outreach training, enabling them to protect themselves and gain employment on the mine site.

Through a train-the-trainer (TTT) model, the NTF also teaches tribal workers to become course instructors so they can train others on the reservation. During the 2017 program year, 27 tribal members were trained in courses that include the 40-hour HAZWOPER, 8-hour HAZWOPER Refresher, and OSHA 10-hour Construction Industry Outreach, as well as a peer TTT course. As of July 2017, 20 tribal members, who received NTF training, are working on the Midnite Mine cleanup.



Members of the Spokane Tribe of the Spokane Reservation learn to use a self-contained breathing apparatus. (Photo courtesy of the International Union of Operating Engineers)

The NTF's trainings for the Midnite Mine site cleanup are funded by the [NIEHS Hazardous Waste Worker Training Program](#), through NIEHS grantee CPWR-The Center for Construction Research and Training, and the [NIEHS/ U.S. Department of Energy \(DOE\) Nuclear Worker Training Program](#).



Members of the Tulalip Tribes of Washington practice decontamination procedures during a HAZWOPER training. (Photo courtesy of Western Region Universities Consortium)

## Washington: Preparing Workers for Hazardous Materials Cleanup at the Hanford Site

Using funds from the NIEHS/ U.S. DOE Nuclear Worker Training Program, the Steelworkers Charitable and Educational Organization Tony Mazzocchi Center (SCEO TMC) provides health and safety trainings to protect nearby tribes from hazardous waste at the Hanford Site in southeastern Washington. For nearly 30 years, Hanford produced tons of plutonium for use in the atomic weapons program. Today, it is the site of one of the world's largest nuclear cleanup efforts, managed by DOE.

SCEO TMC has worked with the Tribal Employment Rights Office of the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, which is located about 20 miles away from the Hanford Site. During the 2017 program year, SCEO TMC delivered courses to tribal members in the Yakama Nation, including the OSHA 511 Occupational Safety and Health Standards for General Industry, Process Safety Management, and OSHA 501 TTT in General Industry. Graduates of the TTT course will conduct future OSHA 10-hour General Industry trainings around the Hanford Site in Kennewick, Toppenish, Wapato, Richland, and Benton City.

Moving forward, SCEO TMC plans to continue expanding their training efforts to include Hazard Mapping, and a four-day Hazardous Waste Cleanup training. SCEO TMC also plans to expand training to other area tribes, including the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and the Nez Perce Tribe.

## Related Links

- [NIEHS WTP Grantees](#)
- [Story on AFC WST: Building Capacity for Native Americans in Hazardous Chemical Safety and Awareness](#)
- [Story on International Union of Operating Engineers NTF: Training in the Spokane Indian Community Ensures a Safety and Healthful Workplace](#)
- [Story on the Three Affiliated Tribes: NIEHS Supports Tribal Emergency Preparedness in North Dakota](#)

For more information on the NIEHS Worker Training Program, visit <https://www.niehs.nih.gov/wtp>.

# Tribal Nations in the Lower 48 States Reached Through NIEHS WTP Training (2015 – 2017 Program Years)

Below is the full list of tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, and Alaska Native Villages who had training participants in WTP program years 2015 through 2017. Tribal and Alaska Native Village names are consistent with the [January 30, 2018 Federal Register notice](#) on “Indian Entities Recognized and Eligible To Receive Services From the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs.”

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## ALABAMA

Poarch Band of Creeks

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## ARIZONA

Gila River Indian Community of the Gila River Indian Reservation

Hopi Tribe of Arizona

Hualapai Indian Tribe of the Hualapai Indian Reservation

Navajo Nation

Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community

White Mountain Apache Tribe of the Fort Apache Reservation

Yavapai-Prescott Indian Tribe

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## CALIFORNIA

Hoopa Valley Tribe

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## CONNECTICUT

Mashantucket Pequot Indian Tribe

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## FLORIDA

Miccosukee Tribe of Indians

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## IDAHO

Nez Perce Tribe

Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Reservation

Shoshone-Paiute Tribes of the Duck Valley Indian Reservation

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## LOUISIANA

Jena Band of Choctaw Indians

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## MAINE

Passamaquoddy Tribe

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## MASSACHUSETTS

Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe

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## MINNESOTA

Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians

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## MISSISSIPPI

Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians

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## MONTANA

Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation

Blackfeet Tribe of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation of Montana

Chippewa Cree Indians of the Rocky Boy's Reservation

Crow Nation of Montana

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## NEBRASKA

Ponca Tribe of Nebraska

Santee Sioux Nation

Winnebago Tribe

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## NEVADA

Paiute-Shoshone Tribe of the Fallon Reservation and Colony

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## NEW MEXICO

Mescalero Apache Tribe of the Mescalero Reservation

Navajo Nation

Pueblo of Acoma

Pueblo of Isleta

Pueblo of Jemez

Pueblo of Laguna

Pueblo of San Felipe

Pueblo of Sandia

Pueblo of Zia

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## NEW YORK

Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe

Seneca Nation of Indians

Tonawanda Band of Seneca

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## NORTH CAROLINA

Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians

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## NORTH DAKOTA

Spirt Lake Tribe

Standing Rock Sioux Tribe of North & South Dakota

Three Affiliated Tribes of the Fort Berthold Reservation

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## OKLAHOMA

Citizen Potawatomi Nation

Kickapoo Tribe

Pawnee Nation

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## OREGON

Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation

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## SOUTH CAROLINA

Catawba Indian Nation

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## SOUTH DAKOTA

Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe of the Cheyenne River Reservation

Lower Brule Sioux Tribe of the Lower Brule Reservation

Rosebud Sioux Tribe of the Rosebud Indian Reservation

Standing Rock Sioux Tribe of North & South Dakota

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## UTAH

Navajo Nation

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## WASHINGTON

Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation

Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation

Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe

Spokane Tribe of the Spokane Reservation

Tulalip Tribes of Washington

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## WISCONSIN

Forest County Potawatomi Community

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## WYOMING

Shoshone Tribe of the Wind River Reservation

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# List of Alaska Native Tribal Entities/Native Villages, Organized by Alaska Native Corporation, Reached Through NIEHS WTP Training (2015 – 2017 Program Years)

## ALASKA NATIVE CORPORATION

Alaska Native Tribal Entity/Native Village

## ARCTIC SLOPE REGIONAL CORPORATION

Native Village of Point Lay

## BERING STRAITS NATIVE CORPORATION

Native Village of Elim

Native Village of Saint Michael

Native Village of Savoonga

Native Village of Shishmaref

Native Village of White Mountain

Nome Eskimo Community

## BRISTOL BAY NATIVE CORPORATION

Chignik Lake Village

Igiugig Village

Kokhanok Village

Manokotak Village

Native Village of Kanatak

New Koliganek Village Council

New Stuyahok Village

Nondalton Village

Traditional Village of Togiak

Village of Iliamna

## CALISTA CORPORATION

Native Village of Chuathbaluk

Native Village of Goodnews Bay

Native Village of Scammon Bay

Organized Village of Kwethluk

Iqurmit Traditional Council

Village of Aniak

Village of Chefornak

Village of Kotlik

Village of Stony River

## COOK INLET REGION, INC.

Knik Tribe

Native Village of Tyonek

## DOYON LIMITED

Allakaket Village

Galena Village

Native Village of Eagle

Native Village of Venetie Tribal Government

Nikolai Village

Nulato Village

Nunakauyarmiut Tribe

Organized Village of Grayling

Village of Kaltag

## KONIAG INC.

Alutiiq Tribe of Old Harbor

Native Village of Akhiok

## NANA REGIONAL CORPORATION

Native Village of Shungnak

Noorvik Native Community

## SEALASKA CORPORATION

Klawock Cooperative Association

Organized Village of Kasaan

Members of the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation attend a 40-hour HAZWOPER training in Poplar, MT. Attendees learned both content knowledge and hands-on skills to identify and handle hazardous materials. (Photos courtesy of Alabama Fire College)





*Left and middle: Members of the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe participate in a 40-hour HAZWOPER training in Akwesasne, NY, gaining skills on HazMat suits and respirators. (Photos courtesy of Alabama Fire College)*  
*Right: The Vocational Training Director for the Tulalip Tribes discusses the Tribal Employment Rights Office (TERO) training facilities. (Photo courtesy of NIEHS)*