



DATE: Nov. 5, 2009

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Nine Schools in Maricopa Unified School District #20 Join ADEQ's School Bus Anti-Idling Program

PHOENIX (Nov. 5, 2009) -- The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality announced today that nine schools in the Maricopa Unified School District #20 have joined the department's School Bus Anti-Idling Program.

The schools joining the highly successful program are Maricopa High School, Desert Wind and Maricopa Wells middle schools, and Butterfield, Maricopa, Pima Butte, Saddleback, Santa Cruz and Santa Rosa elementary schools. The district has a total of 6,500 students and 50 buses.

Overall, a total of 157 school districts in all of the State of Arizona's 15 counties participate in the program, which began in 2004, including 1,024 schools, 4,841 school buses and more than 710,000 students.

"This is proving to be a great partnership between ADEQ and school districts throughout the state," said ADEQ Director Benjamin H. Grumbles. "It has produced outstanding results in reducing the children's exposure to toxic diesel exhaust and we strongly encourage other school districts in the state to join us in this important effort."

Schools participating in the anti-idling program require bus drivers to turn off their engines when they arrive at a loading or departure spot on school grounds and not turn the engine back on until the bus is ready to leave. Buses also must be parked at least 100 feet from a school air intake system and signs are posted advising drivers to limit idling near schools.

Diesel emissions from school buses can aggravate respiratory illnesses such as asthma and have been linked to heart and lung disease. One of the primary components of diesel emissions, carbon monoxide, also can reduce alertness and learning capacity in children.

For more information about the School Bus Anti-Idling Program, contact Julie Finke of ADEQ at (602)771-2231 or jac@azdeq.gov