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ADEQ Announces Completion of Project, 1,347 Pounds of Outdated Chemicals Removed from Three Nogales Schools

PHOENIX (June 26, 2013) – Arizona Department of Environmental Quality officials announced today that a chemical cleanout project has been completed in Nogales at Nogales High School, Desert Shadows Middle School and Challenger Elementary School and that 1,347 pounds of outdated chemicals were removed from the three schools.

Many of the chemicals were outdated and a few were unlabeled and had been stored for several years. The project was undertaken as part of ADEQ's goal of building awareness about the dangers of storing outdated chemicals and the importance of developing chemical management plans in partnership with schools throughout the state.

"This is an important first step to help schools oversee the use of chemicals and make sure students and school personnel are protected," said ADEQ Director Henry Darwin. "When chemicals are mismanaged they create risk from spills, fires and other accidental exposures in and around schools."

"ADEQ and the University of Arizona staff were invaluable in assisting us to develop a process for completing a comprehensive, electronic chemical inventory at each site in our district, identifying chemicals to be removed and providing financial assistance to remove them," said Fernando Parra, assistant superintendent of Nogales Unified School District #1 (NUSD). The district includes two high schools, two middle schools, and six elementary schools.

Chemicals at the various schools were inventoried and administrators and science teachers informed about chemical management and the removal and proper disposal of chemicals by a licensed contractor. NUSD has also developed a districtwide chemical management plan and will continue to build awareness about chemical safety to its personnel.

ADEQ has developed a Schools Chemical Management Toolkit for interested schools at <http://www.azdeq.gov/ceh/index.html> in English and http://www.azdeq.gov/ceh/download/sc_toolkit-SP.pdf in Spanish. ADEQ partnered with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Border Environment Cooperation Commission and the University of Arizona in developing the toolkit.

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