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CONTACT: Mark Shaffer, Director of Communications, (602) 771-2215 (o);
(480) 433-9551 (cell)

Air Pollution Health Watch Issued for Nogales, Arizona

PHOENIX (Dec. 23, 2013) – The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality has issued a Health Watch for fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) that will be in effect tomorrow, Dec. 24, in and around Nogales, Ariz. The Health Watch may likely be extended through Christmas day and evening, Dec. 25.

The Health Watch results from a combination of less than favorable dispersion and trapped smoke emitted from holiday-related recreational wood burning, which cause concentrations of fine particulates, commonly known as soot, to approach unhealthy levels by late Tuesday.

A Health Watch means that the concentration of soot may approach the federal health standard for this pollutant. Unusually sensitive people, such as people with heart or lung disease, older adults and children, should reduce prolonged activity or heavy exertion, especially when outdoors.

Fine particulate matter poses serious health risks because the particles are so small (finer than a grain of flour) that they lodge deeply in the lungs when inhaled, where they are then absorbed by the bloodstream. Studies have linked long-term exposure to PM_{2.5} to loss of lung function, bronchitis, asthma, lung disease, heart attacks and increased death rates.

Nogales area residents and businesses are asked to use the following tips to help make the air healthier to breathe:

- Do not burn wood or wax logs in a fireplace, wood stove or any outdoor wood burning appliance.
- Limit driving: car pool, combine trips, use public transportation.
- Avoid activities that generate dust, such as driving on dirt roads, using off-highway vehicles and leaf blowers.
- Stabilize loose soils.

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