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ADEQ Issues Year's First High Pollution Advisory for Particulate Matter for Wednesday, May 21

PHOENIX (May 20, 2008) - The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality has issued a High Pollution Advisory (HPA) for Wednesday, May 21 for the Phoenix metropolitan area because of forecast weather conditions which are expected to generate levels of coarse Particulate Matter 10 (PM10), or dust, that could exceed unhealthy levels.

The HPA is being issued because high winds with gusts up to 40 mph are forecast, which may result in concentrations of coarse particles that approach unhealthy levels Wednesday. Recent record heat and dry conditions make soils very prone to creating dust.

"This is the first High Pollution Advisory for PM10 that we have issued this year," ADEQ Director Steve Owens said. "We urge Valley residents to take steps to help reduce particulate matter pollution, as well as reduce their exposure to the pollution."

ADEQ recommends that children and adults with respiratory problems avoid outdoor activities on Wednesday and suggests that the general public limit outdoor activity throughout the day. Employers participating in the Valley's Trip Reduction Program should implement their pollution reduction action plans and all Valley residents should reduce particulate matter-producing emissions by taking the following steps:

- Car pool, use mass transit, telecommute and/or reduce driving.
- Avoid using gas-powered lawn and garden equipment.
- Avoid activities that generate dust, such as driving on dirt roads.
- Stabilize loose soils.
- Eliminate fireplace and wood stove use.

PM10 refers to particles that are 10 micrometers in diameter or smaller. Once inhaled, these particles can affect the heart and lungs and cause serious health effects, including increased respiratory symptoms, irritation of the airways, coughing, difficulty breathing, decreased lung function, aggravated asthma, development of chronic bronchitis, irregular heartbeat, nonfatal heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease.

Daily air quality forecasts are on ADEQ's Web site at www.azdeq.gov/environ/air/ozone/ensemble.pdf or by calling (602) 771-2367. Those interested in receiving the air quality forecast via email can subscribe to our forecast list at www.azdeq.gov/subscribe.html.