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ADEQ Director Owens Launches New ADEQ Web Page to Provide Air Quality Data to Communities Affected by Pollution from Prescribed Burns

PHOENIX (Dec. 24, 2008) – Arizona Department of Environmental Quality Director Steve Owens announced today that ADEQ has created a Web page to provide communities affected by smoke and other particulate matter (PM) pollution from prescribed forest burns and other fires with data on air quality in their area. The new ADEQ web site will give the public access to current data recorded by ADEQ's portable air quality monitoring network located in seven rural communities throughout the state.

The network records hourly average concentrations of PM pollution in Cottonwood, Flagstaff, Green Valley, Prescott, Sedona, Show Low and Springerville. The page is online at www.phoenixvis.net/PPMmain.aspx.

ADEQ has placed portable air quality monitors in these communities to provide a better picture of PM air pollution in areas with frequent prescribed forest burns. People with respiratory problems living in these communities can be affected by smoke and other particulate pollution from the burns. The air monitoring network will help ADEQ assess the impact of the prescribed burns as well as that of wood-burning fireplaces and stoves. The availability of air-quality information from the monitors should also encourage people who burn wood to switch to EPA-approved lower-emission devices.

“This is another part of our effort to provide the people of Arizona with as much information as possible about air quality in their communities,” Director Owens said. “This information will be especially helpful to people with asthma and other respiratory problems who now will be able to check our new Web page every day to plan their activities and manage their health. Anybody with access to the Web can track the air quality conditions from their home, office, or school.”

The Web page shows a map of the network, plus numeric and color-coded hourly PM averages. Clicking on the location shows a chart of hourly changes, and gives users the option of viewing previous data from that site. The Web page also includes photos of the devices themselves as well as definitions and information about the health effects of PM air pollution.

Exposure to unhealthy levels of PM can cause an array of lung and heart problems. Small particles less than 10 micrometers in diameter pose the greatest problems since they can get deep into the lungs or even the bloodstream.

Portable AQ Monitors

2 – 2 – 2

In addition to the portable monitors, ADEQ provides information about open burning and prescribed burns and wildfires at www.azdeq.gov/environ/air/smoke/index.html .