



DATE: March 25, 2009

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ADEQ Issues High Pollution Advisory for Particulate Matter for Thursday, March 26

PHOENIX (March 25, 2009) - The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality has issued a High Pollution Advisory (HPA) for Thursday, March 26 for the Phoenix metropolitan area because of forecast weather conditions that are expected to be conducive to unhealthy levels of fine Particulate Matter 10 (PM10) microns and smaller.

The HPA is being issued because of anticipated winds with gusts of up to 35-40 miles per hour Thursday afternoon. The combination of winds and loose, dry soil due to the recent lack of rainfall means a high chance of blowing dust across the Valley for several hours on Thursday through early Friday.

ADEQ recommends that children and adults with respiratory problems avoid outdoor activities on Thursday and suggests that the general public limit outdoor activity throughout the day. Due to the possibility of reduced visibility because of dust, motorists should exercise caution.

In addition, the Maricopa County Air Quality Department has designated Thursday to be a No-Burn Day for residential fireplaces, woodstoves and outdoor burning devices.

Also, under state law, recreational use of off-highway vehicles (OHVs) in Area A of the greater Phoenix area is prohibited. Local ordinances in the Valley also limit the use of leaf blowers.

PM10 refers to particles that are 10 micrometers in diameter or smaller. Once inhaled, these particles can affect the heart and lungs and cause health effects, including irritation of the airways, coughing, difficulty breathing, decreased lung function, asthma, development of chronic bronchitis, irregular heartbeat, 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/enviro/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.