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ADEQ Adds 20 Schools in Maricopa, Casa Grande and Florence to Air Quality Flag Program

PHOENIX – (Aug. 3, 2009) – Arizona Department of Environmental Quality officials announced today that 20 schools in Pinal County have joined the agency’s Air Quality Flag Program, in which participants fly flags on school grounds primarily as an alert on high air pollution days in the community.

The new participating schools include nine each in the City of Maricopa and the Town of Florence and two in the City of Casa Grande. The purpose of the program is to notify the public when unhealthy levels of particulate matter and ozone are expected so people can modify their activities and reduce exposure to the pollutants.

The Maricopa schools participating are Maricopa, Santa Rosa, Pima Butte, Saddleback, Santa Cruz, and Butterfield elementary schools; Maricopa Well and Desert Wind middle schools; and Maricopa High School. The Florence K-8 schools are Anthem, Florence, Walker Butte, Circle Cross, Magma Ranch, Copper Basin, and Skyline Ranch; and Florence and Poston Butte high schools. The Casa Grande schools are McCartney Ranch and Cottonwood elementary schools.

The ADEQ Air Quality Flag Program uses green, yellow, orange and red flags to indicate expected current air quality conditions in a community from pollution forecasts prepared by meteorologists and air quality scientists and based on the federal health standards for air quality.

Green flags mean that air quality is expected to be good; yellow flags mean there might be some health concerns for people particularly sensitive to elevated pollution levels; orange flags mean that forecast pollution levels could negatively impact children, the elderly and those with existing lung and heart conditions; and red flags mean conditions may become unhealthy for all.

“We congratulate these 20 schools in Pinal County for their commitment to protecting public health and the environment by joining ADEQ’s voluntary flag program,” said ADEQ Director Benjamin H. Grumbles. “As we partner with more school districts, our Air Quality Flag Program will increase public health and community awareness throughout the state.”

Pinal Flags

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In addition to Pinal County, 22 schools in the Roosevelt Elementary School District in Phoenix, four schools in the Yuma area, and one school in the Higley Unified School District in the Southeast Valley also are participating in the flag program.

For more information about the flag program, contact ADEQ's Julie Finke at (602) 771-2231 or visit <http://www.azdeq.gov/ceh/flag.html>

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