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ADEQ Improves Air Quality in Santa Cruz, Cochise counties by Completing 39 School Bus Retrofits to Reduce Emissions

PHOENIX (Oct. 1, 2010) – Arizona Department of Environmental Quality officials announced today that a major initiative to improve air quality in two Arizona border counties has been completed with the installation of retrofit devices on 39 school buses to reduce harmful diesel emissions in the region.

The \$149,000 ADEQ initiative, funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Border 2012 program with technical assistance from the Border Environment Cooperation Commission, equipped the school buses with devices to reduce particulate matter air pollution from diesel emissions from between nearly 30 percent and 90 percent, depending on the device used. The project began in the fall of 2008.

In Santa Cruz County, 11 buses were retrofitted in the Patagonia public schools, five in Nogales Unified School District #1, and three in the Santa Cruz Elementary School District. In Cochise County, nine buses were retrofitted in Douglas Unified School District #27, six in the Palominas School District, three in Bisbee Unified School District #2 and one each in Naco Elementary School District #23 and Tombstone Unified School District #1.

“Our clean school bus campaign continues to grow and that's great news for air quality and children's health throughout Arizona,” ADEQ Director Benjamin H. Grumbles said.

The Border 2012 program is a collaboration between the United States and Mexico to improve the environment and protect the health of the nearly 12 million people living along the border. The bi-national program focuses on cleaning the air, providing safe drinking water, reducing the risk of exposure to hazardous waste, and ensuring emergency preparedness along the U.S.-Mexico border.

ADEQ and EPA also partnered in a 2008 project to retrofit 32 school buses in the Santa Cruz Valley Unified School District #35 and in 2009 to retrofit 55 diesel short-haul 18-wheel trucks which haul cargo on both sides of the border.

The initiative complements other ADEQ programs to reduce diesel emissions, including the department's program to reduce school bus idling, which has been adopted by more than 700 schools in the state.

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