



Maricopa County
Air Quality Department



PRESS RELEASE

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State, County Officials Thank Maricopa County Residents for Cleaner Air, Not Burning Wood During Holiday Season

PHOENIX (Jan. 7, 2015) – Officials from the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality and Maricopa County Air Quality Department expressed their thanks today to county residents for taking the “No Burn Day? Don’t Burn Wood” mantra to heart this holiday season.

For the first time in 11 years, there were no exceedances of the state and federal annual 24-hour health standard for Particulate Matter-2.5, or soot, on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year’s Eve or New Year’s Day. Because of the lower soot concentrations, Maricopa County avoided exceeding the annual federal health standards for PM-2.5.

“I would like to thank the Maricopa County residents for complying with the No Burn restrictions which allowed all residents to enjoy cleaner, fresher air this holiday season,” Maricopa County Air Quality Director Philip McNeely said. “Our inspectors in the field noticed less wood-burning activities in the field this holiday season.”

“It was clear that many more people this holiday season were not lighting up their fireplaces and chimineas,” ADEQ Air Quality Division Director Eric Massey said. “Soot levels never got above the ‘moderate’ range during those four days and there hasn’t been a holiday season since 2003 when two or more of the days weren’t in the unhealthy range.”

High levels of soot from the smoke of wood-burning fireplaces and chimineas during the winter – most commonly on the four holiday dates – pose serious health threats to children with asthma, the elderly and those with respiratory issues. If the county violates the standard and is classified as non-attainment, there will be additional controls on PM-2.5 emissions which will include stricter regulations, higher fines for our residents and commercial facilities, and the potential of losing federal highway funds.

The lower soot levels on the four days can be attributed to wider exposure and increased media attention to the state and county’s No Burn campaign, more Maricopa County residents adhering with the No Burn restrictions and some unusual rainy and breezy conditions in the Valley.

Despite the lower levels, residents need to remain diligent and continue to adhere to No Burn days. A PM-2.5 exceedance was recorded Sunday, Jan. 4.

To find out if it is a No Burn day, go to www.CleanAirMakeMore.com, download the Clean Air Make More app or call (602) 506-6400. For more information, contact Mark Shaffer of ADEQ at (602) 771-2215 or Bob Huhn of MCAQD at (602) 506-6713.