

Dust Control Issues

What is Particulate Matter?

Particulate Matter (PM) is one of the most significant air pollutants in Pima County. PM is made up of tiny particles (a fraction of the thickness of a human hair) that float in the air we breathe. The fine particles can pass through your body's defense system, travel into the deepest parts of your lungs, and cause damage.

What can Particulate Matter cause?

- Breathing difficulties
- Respiratory pain
- Reduced lung function
- Weakened immune systems
- Increased severity of acute bronchitis, pneumonia, asthma, and emphysema
- Heart attacks
- Premature death (1-8 years)

PM also reduces visibility which can be hazardous while driving, and interferes with beautiful views.

What are major sources of Particulate Matter?

- Disturbed vacant or open lands
- Construction and mining activity
- Unpaved parking lots
- Industrial sources
- Off-road vehicle activity
- Unpaved roads
- Paved roads
- Diesel exhaust

What are the rules?

Title 17 of the Pima County Code lists many regulations with which you must comply. These rules basically state that you must take reasonable precautions to control dust at all times, whether or not the site is active, at night time, on weekends, or on holidays. You must also not let airborne dust cross property boundaries, and the opacity of dust plumes must be 20% or less. (Completely obscured visibility = 100% opacity, clear = 0%.)

What happens if we don't control dust on our project sites?

Pima County violated the Environmental Protection Agency's national PM health standards in 1999. Currently, we are maintaining the air quality standards under new Pima County rules and regulations. If airborne PM is not controlled, we risk having more stringent federal rules, more costly fines, and losing federal monies for transportation projects.

Pima County Department of Environmental Quality (PDEQ) employs inspectors who are dedicated to respond to complaints, and also provide routine surveillance on active and inactive operations (including weekends). If you are found to be in violation, PDEQ will contact you requesting that you take effective action to control dust. If you fail to take reasonable measures, escalated enforcement may be necessary, including fines.

The Following Actions May Help Control Dust:

- Get an Activity Permit from PDEQ.
- Plan responsibly:
 - Locate entrance, exit, and trailer to minimize traffic.
 - Post and enforce lower speed limits.
 - Locate haul roads and storage piles away from existing housing.
 - Grade each phase separately timed to coincide with construction phase.
 - Have an appropriate number of water trucks available.
 - Educate and empower equipment operators to control dust.
 - Monitor wind conditions.
- Water at sufficient frequency, quantity, and depth, including pre-soaking.
- Use chemical stabilizers.
- Use windbreaks like fences or trees.
- Cover haul material.
- Do not overload haul vehicle.
- Use grizzlies, gravel, or paving to prevent trackout.
- Have vehicles stay on established routes, and keep these routes moist.
- If all else fails, stop vehicle and work activities temporarily.
- Plant vegetation after active operations have ceased.

Take Action Now!

Avoid Fines Later.