



Pima County Department of Environmental Quality

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Look What the Wind Blew In! Homeowners, Got Dust? Keep it Down!

Airborne Dust is Particulate Matter Pollution

Particulate Matter (PM) is simply airborne dust. It consists of complex microscopic solid particles or liquid droplets that become airborne from many types of sources. PM is harmful to human health, is a public nuisance, and is a regulated pollutant that must be minimized.

Particulate Matter is Hazardous

Airborne dust affects human health in significant ways. Children, the elderly, and people with existing heart and respiratory disease are most at risk from breathing particulates. Healthy individuals are affected as well, especially outdoor workers and exercisers. Breathing PM can cause:

- Reduced lung function;
- Aggravated heart and respiratory disease;
- Irritations to the nose, throat, and ear canal;
- Chronic bronchitis;
- Difficulty breathing;
- Heart attacks;
- Weakened immune system; and even
- Premature death (by 1-8 years).

In addition, the quality of life of neighbors exposed to airborne dust may also be compromised. Besides health affects, neighbors complain about the inability to have backyard barbecues, needing to keep windows and doors closed, and having to dust more frequently than usual during airborne dust episodes caused by human activity.

Homeowners Are Responsible for Airborne Dust

Title 17 of the Pima County Code, Section 17.16.050 states in part, *“No person shall cause, suffer, allow, or permit activities likely to result in excessive amounts of airborne dust without taking reasonable precautions to prevent particulate matter from becoming airborne.”*

This means that you must take action to prevent too much dust from becoming airborne on your property, no matter what the activity is that is causing the dust. Some areas of concern include horse corrals and arenas, home improvement projects, all-terrain vehicle tracks, yard maintenance, and dirt roads and driveways.

Horse Corrals and Arenas

Special Concerns: Soil in areas used regularly is disturbed. Dust may become airborne during activity and later during wind events.

Solutions to Consider:

- Make sure the base is properly compacted.
- Water heavily (at least 2” down) and seldom (as opposed to lightly and frequently) to coat particles and make them stick together.
- Apply stable/wood shavings, wood chips, mulch, compost, or fiber additives to footing to help retain moisture and prevent footing breakdown.
- Use environmentally friendly dust suppressant products
- Do your research. Check the internet and read articles to learn about costs, advantages, and limitations of these methods.





Home Improvement Projects

Special Concerns: Earthmoving activity kicks up dust. Untreated disturbed soil is vulnerable to wind. Wind may pick up dust from stockpiles and blow it into neighboring homes or property.

Solutions to Consider:

- Water effectively before and during activity as necessary.
- Water after activity to form a temporary crust to combat wind.
- Keep stockpiles away from neighboring property.
- Cover stockpiles with a tarp



ATV Tracks

Special Concerns: Fast, repetitive action kicks up dust and disturbs the topsoil crust, leaving the soil vulnerable to future wind events.

Solutions to Consider:

- Avoid riding in residential areas.
- Keep tracks away from property boundaries.
- Avoid riding on windy days.
- Reduce speed in dry areas, or if you see too much dust kicking up.
- Water or use another dust suppressant effectively before, during as necessary, and after activity.



Yard Maintenance

Special Concerns: Leaf blowers can relocate leaves, debris, and dirt into the street or neighboring property instead of removing them. Not only are emissions of gas-powered blowers thick in a concentrated area, swirling clouds of airborne debris, dust, pollen, and mold spores may pollute the air. Earthmoving activity disturbs the soil crust, leaving it vulnerable to wind.

Solutions to Consider

- Use manual rakes and brooms instead of blowers.
- Use electric vacuum blowers instead of gas-powered units, and limit the power or air speed to keep dirt from getting picked up.
- Refrain from using commercial sized blowers that are employed for blowing off large areas.
- Use water before and during earth moving activity as necessary, and afterwards to create a soil crust.
- Use native, drought-tolerant vegetation or rocks.



Dirt Driveways and Roads

Special Concerns: Frequent traffic continually breaks down the soil into smaller particle sizes. The act of driving kicks up dust and makes the area more vulnerable to later wind events.

Solutions to Consider:

- Pave, gravel, or apply dust suppressant products on driveways and private right-of-ways.
- Drive slower on dirt roads.
- Be considerate of homes that are likely to get the most dust depending on bends in the road, wind direction, and condition of the road.