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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Landscapers Required to Control Airborne Dust

Tucson, AZ (July 20, 2004) – To protect human health, Pima County Code Title 17 requires landscape and landscape maintenance businesses to take reasonable precautions to control excessive amounts of particulate pollution from becoming airborne. Many companies may not be aware that they must control dust, nor of the health implications that increased levels of particulate matter in the air pose for their employees, clients, and neighbors. Methods to reduce airborne dust pollution include effective use of water, wind fences, trackout controls, and using a substitute for gas-powered leaf blowers.

“Children, the elderly, and people with respiratory or heart disease are most at risk from breathing particulate pollution, but healthy people working under dusty conditions can be affected as well,” stated Beth Gorman, Program Manager for PDEQ. “Particulate pollution can cause breathing difficulties, respiratory pain, reduced lung function, heart attacks, and even premature death,” she continued.

If soil is left undisturbed, it naturally binds together forming a crust that resists wind. When the soil’s crust is disturbed, dust particles can become airborne more easily during high wind events. Therefore, wind can pick up dust from disturbed areas long after the activity was completed.

Landscaping activities that may produce excessive airborne dust include: digging or trenching; utilizing storage piles; tracking out dirt or mud onto roads; and using leaf blowers. “Options to reduce airborne dust include: applying water effectively throughout operations, utilizing wind breaks such as fencing or trees, using gravel pads or shoulders to keep dirt from tracking onto paved roads, and using rakes, brooms, electric units, or vacuum blowers, instead of gas-powered leaf blowers,” Gorman stated. “If leaf blowers must be used, operators should use them appropriately, that is, to blow leaves, and not dirt or debris,” she continued.

“We make every effort to ensure our employees are trained in the proper dust abatement procedures,” stated Charlie Allen, Senior Project Manager of AAA Landscape. “Steps we take include properly wetting all construction material being processed, minimizing the use of blowers where possible in our maintenance operations, keeping all construction haul roads properly watered and compacted, and covering loads when transporting trash and green waste,” he continued.

“The Groundskeeper strives to meet or exceed governmental requirements regarding air quality,” stated David Ramsze, Vice President of The Groundskeeper. “We do this by utilizing brooms to sweep debris instead of using gas-powered blowers whenever possible, equipping staff with new blowers every year to ensure the use of the latest efficient models, and tarping or wetting loads to prevent blowing debris.”

Additional information can be obtained by calling Pima County at 724-7446 or by visiting www.deq.pima.gov. Current air quality information can be found at www.AirInfoNow.org.

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