

Air Quality & Agriculture

Air Quality In Action

Fall 2011 Newsletter



Contact me for more information or if you would like a site visit....

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NEWSLETTER HAS A NEW LOOK

The quarterly newsletter has changed its name and look but you will still receive updated information on air quality regulations and the Ag Best Management Practices program. Articles will highlight featured BMPs and other sectors of agriculture throughout the state.

UPDATE ON THE AG BMP PROGRAM

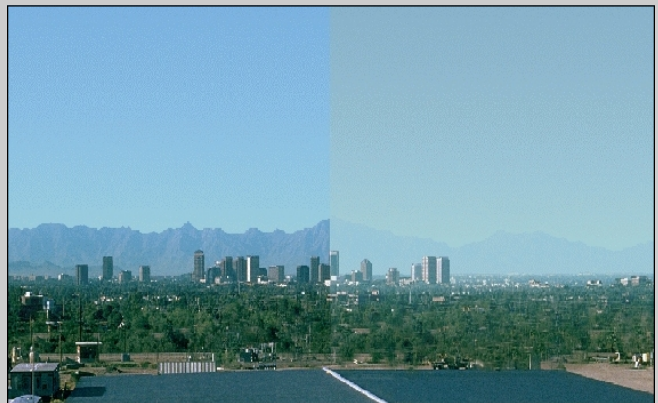
The Governor's Agricultural Best Management Practices Committee and its Technical Work Groups have reconvened to address EPA's concerns with the Ag BMP program. The EPA has stated that the Ag BMP program needed to be more "specific", "enforceable" and be able to demonstrate the reductions from the Ag BMPs. The Technical Work Groups are drafting new definitions to make the BMPs more specific, which will make them more enforceable. These definitions will still need to go to the Governor's Ag BMP Committee for final approval before they replace the existing definitions. The EPA is also demanding mandatory reporting from each farm so that the PM10 reductions can be measured. A new General Record Permit Record is being developed. A question remains about whether the report will be collected by the Arizona Department of Agriculture or the Department of Environmental Quality.



WAYS I CAN REDUCE PM10

The peak months for PM10 pollution begin in October and last through March. Cooler weather means the beginning of our winter pollution season and an increase of particulate matter (PM10). The presence of an inversion creates a very stable atmosphere and leads to very little mixing of the air, trapping the pollutants close to the ground. The following are ways that individuals, businesses, and other organizations can immediately reduce the threat of PM10:

- Reduce travel on days with poor air quality.
- Avoid using your wood stove and fireplace on days that have poor air quality.
- Avoid using leaf blowers and other dust-producing equipment.
- Drive slowly on unpaved roads and other dirt surfaces.
- Get involved with air quality improvement programs in your community by implementing Ag BMPs.
- Receive a Dust Control Forecast from the Arizona Department of Agriculture. If interested in receiving a forecast please email Rusty Van Leuven at rvanleuven@azda.gov.



FEATURED BMP: REDUCED TILLAGE SYSTEM

A reduced tillage system is reducing the number of tillage operations used to produce a crop. Any tillage operation in a field can modify the soil structure and possibly release PM10 into the air. Reducing the number of tillage activities can maintain the soil structure and help reduce PM10. The reduced tillage system BMP is one of the many BMPs in the Tillage and Harvest category. Examples of a reduced tillage system include: minimum tillage, which is eliminating all unnecessary or extra tillage passes from the field; mulch tillage, which partially incorporate surface residues and involves no plowing; and no-till, which involves planting directly into the soil without any alterations to the seedbed. Consult your local NRCS office to receive the Standards and Specifications to implement this BMP as an conservation practice.



Minimum Tillage: Planting on top of existing potato bed

Not only does a reduced tillage system help to reduce PM10 but can also save energy use. A reduced tillage system compared to conventional tillage will eliminate tillage passes which will reduce the amount of fuel used and create a savings for you.

ENERGY USE AND AIR QUALITY

Reducing your energy use can have a direct effect on improving air quality. Implementing certain Ag BMPs will have an effect on your energy use and could save you money. For example, using the residue management BMP you not only protect the soil from reducing wind erosion but could save at least 3.5 gallons of fuel per acre. Using precision farming will reduce overlap and thus reduce the amount of passes on the field. This reduction can save you fuel, herbicide and insecticide use.

A new program the Arizona Department of Agriculture (ADA) is excited to be involved in is the On-Farm Agriculture Energy Audits. The ADA has partnered with Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Governor's Office of Energy Policy to offer producers an Energy Audit at no cost. The first step in reducing your energy costs is to have an audit completed and see where to reduce energy use. Producers can reduce their input costs, maintain production, protect natural resources, reduce dependence on fossil fuels, improve air quality and save money by using conservation practices. For more information contact Rusty Van Leuven at (602) 542-3484.

NURSERIES AND SOURCES OF DUST



When you think of nurseries; dust control or best management practices don't come to mind. In general there are no tillage or harvest activities associated with the production of plants in a nursery. Nursery stock is grown on top of the ground and not in the ground. Nurseries or growing grounds don't create much dust in the manner that row crops do but are still considered agricultural dust contributors and are part of the Ag BMP program.

Most of the dust generated in a nursery comes from unpaved roads, parking lots, and equipment or storage yards. In the Ag BMP program these fall in the non-cropland category. Some best management practices in this category include: access restriction, aggregate cover, reduced vehicle speed, and watering. Also, keep an eye out for track-out and clean it up as soon as possible.

Remember, if your operation is larger than 10 contiguous acres and is within Maricopa or Yuma County, you are required to participate in the Ag BMP program. You will need to implement at least two best management practices in each of the three categories.