

Frequently Asked Questions

Overview

Maricopa County faces a crisis with air pollution which jeopardizes our health and threatens transportation funds. That is why it is up to each and every one of us to make more clean air. By taking small, simple actions every day we all can make a difference.

- Don't burn wood, leaves, trash or other materials.
- Stop using leaf blowers, rake or use a broom instead.
- Carpool or use public transit such as the Light Rail or bus.
- Change your light bulbs to CFLs.
- If you do choose to drive, make sure your tires are properly inflated.

Visit www.CleanAirMakeMore.com to Make the Clean Air Commitment.

Air Quality

Q: How bad is the air in Maricopa County?

A: Maricopa County faces a federal mandate to clean up the air. Not only is poor air quality a threat to our health, it's a threat to vital transportation dollars coming into the state. This problem was not caused by one person or entity alone. It is up to each and every one of us to do our part to make more clean air.

Q: Other than health reasons, why does Maricopa County need to clean the air?

A: On December 31, 2006, the region failed to reach attainment of the federal PM -10 standard. This is because the Valley had more than three days over the last three years in which the particulate matter levels exceeded the national standard. In fact, there were 12 days in 2008 where at least one county monitor exceeded the particulate matter standard. The following briefly outlines the steps Maricopa County is taking to rectify this situation:

- Maricopa County along with the state, the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) and 24 various local cities and towns developed a plan to reduce particulate matter emissions by 5% each year until the region meets federal standards.
- The plan was submitted to the EPA by December 31, 2007.
- Going forward, the area must show a 5% reduction of PM-10 each year until all air quality monitors show the national PM-10 standard is achieved.

Q: What is the Brown Cloud and is it a problem?

A: The Brown Cloud that hangs over our Valley skyline is a problem but dust pollution is only a small part of it. The Brown Cloud contains components of:

- Fuel combustion particulates (PM 2.5)
- Nitrogen Oxide (the brown color)
- Dust
- Smoke from wood-burning



Frequently Asked Questions

Why is the Clean Air Make More Initiative Important?

Q: *Who will this campaign benefit?*

A: *Everyone.* A top priority of Maricopa County is to protect public health. Dust pollution can cause severe breathing difficulties, upper respiratory problems and can aggravate asthma conditions. Maricopa County is making a commitment to its residents to make more clean air. We are asking that residents, young and old, make the commitment to do what they can to make more clean air and make Maricopa County a healthier place for us all.

Q: *How long will it take to fix the problem?*

A: This is a long term commitment but the effects can be immediate. We are required to show the EPA three years of clean data at the monitors before we reach attainment. That means our air quality monitors cannot exceed the federal standard more than three times within three years.

Q: *What can individuals do to help clean up the air?*

A: Make the Clean Air Commitment - Maricopa County is urging all of its residents to do their part, take ownership of their air, and commit to make a difference. Making the Clean Air Commitment shows you are going to take action and help make more clean air in Maricopa County. Visit CleanAirMakeMore.com to Make the Clean Air Commitment and take small simple actions everyday to make more clean air. The three major commitments we are asking everyone to make are:

- Don't burn wood, leaves, trash or other materials.
- Use a rake or a broom rather than a leaf blower.
- Use an alternative mode of transportation one to seven days a week. This can include carpooling, telecommuting, riding the bus or Light Rail.

Q: *What is the importance of the Air Quality Department?*

A: The primary focus of the Air Quality Department is to reduce the number of days this region exceeds the federal health standard for air pollution. Not only is this a matter of public health, but federal transportation dollars are at risk for the entire state of Arizona if we cannot reduce dust and ozone pollution.

Financial Implications

Q: *What is the 5% Plan?*

A: It is a plan to reduce particulate emissions by five percent each year until we reach attainment. Maricopa County along with the Maricopa Association of Governments, the state and local regulatory agencies all worked together to form the plan. The plan is in the hands of the EPA now.

Q: *What is at stake financially for the county in the future if this program fails?*

A: Failure to fulfill the requirements in the 5% Plan will put Maricopa County and the entire state of Arizona in jeopardy of losing billions of dollars in federal highway funds. Losing this funding is not an option. It is the responsibility of all citizens in Maricopa County to help reduce air pollution.

Q: *Who are the major contributors to PM-10 pollution, Regulated Industry or Individuals?*

A: Some sources are larger than others but all of us contribute to dust pollution. In addition to individuals, the Air Quality Department regulates industry, businesses and construction activity. Each year the Air Quality Department collects fines from businesses that are not in compliance with air pollution regulation.

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By the numbers

Our Air – by the numbers

- 2008 We recorded **12** days where at least one of the air quality monitors exceeded the federal standard for particulate matter.
- 2007 We recorded **11** days where at least one of the air quality monitors exceeded the federal standard for particulate matter.
- 2006 We recorded **27** days where at least one of the air quality monitors exceeded the federal standard for particulate matter.
- 2005 We recorded **19** days where at least one of the air quality monitors exceeded the federal standard for particulate matter.
- 2004 We recorded **1** day where at least one of the air quality monitors exceeded the federal standard for particulate matter.

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