ADEQ Arizona Department of Environmental Quality

FACT SHEET

Publication Number: FS 14-06
Revised 03-19

Air Quality Flag Program

WHAT IS THE ADEQ AIR QUALITY FLAG PROGRAM?

The Air Quality Flag Program uses nautical-style flags, based on the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Air Quality Index (AQI), to notify the public of air quality conditions. Flag programs have been successful in the Maricopa, Pima, Pinal, Yuma, and Santa Cruz Counties. The programs fly flags that match warning levels of the AQI.

WHY WAS THE FLAG PROGRAM DEVELOPED?

The purpose of this program is to create public awareness of outdoor air quality conditions so people can modify their behavior to reduce exposure to pollutants. Air quality affects how we live and breathe. Children (including teenagers) are at greater risk from air pollution because their lungs are still developing and they breathe more air per pound of body weight than adults. Chronic exposure to even moderate levels of pollutants may decrease lung function. Therefore, reducing exposure to outdoor air pollutants is a simple way to protect children.

WHAT IS THE AIR QUALITY INDEX?

The AQI tells you how polluted the air is and what associated health effects might be a concern for you. The AQI focuses on health effects you may experience within a few hours or days after breathing polluted air. ADEQ and some local districts calculate the AQI for four major air pollutants regulated by the Clean Air Act: ground-level ozone, PM 10, PM2.5 and carbon monoxide. For each of these pollutants, the EPA has established National Air Quality Standards to protect public health.

WHAT DO THE FLAG COLORS REPRESENT?

The flags represent different pollutants during different times of the year. From March through October, the flags will typically be for ozone. From October to March, the flags will typically be for Particulate Matter. If a warning is issued for both ozone and particulates, the school will fly the flag that protects the greater at-risk population.

WHERE ARE THE FLAGS POSTED?

The flags will be posted at participating schools and/or community centers in an area visible to the public.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF THE FLAG SHOWS THAT THE AIR QUALITY IS POOR?

If your child has asthma or other respiratory ailments, you should consult with the school nurse or the individual responsible for administering the Flag Program. The administrator or nurse will be able to provide you with the appropriate information so you may act accordingly to the air quality level.

ADEQ Contacts:

airqualityflagprogram@azdeq.gov
602-771- 2231 or
toll free at 800-234- 5677 Ext. 771-2231
On the web: azdeq.gov/FlagProgram

For translations or other communications aids, please email the Title VI Coordinator at Bingham.Ian@azdeq.gov | Para traducciones u otras ayudas de comunicación, envíe un correo electrónico al Coordinador del Título VI al Bingham.Ian@azdeq.gov.

***GREEN** - air quality is good.*

***YELLOW** - air quality is fair.*

***ORANGE** - air quality is approaching unhealthy.*

***RED** - air quality is unhealthy.*