

Golf Courses and the “Maricopa County Air Quality Department” ~ By Mark Clark, CGCS

Air quality has become a priority with many of our government agencies, but none more than here in Maricopa County. “Maricopa County Air Quality Department” division has now put golf courses on their radar.

The federal Clean Air Act has set some pretty high standards for air quality all over the country. Maricopa County is no exception. In fact, because of the nature of this area having inversions from surrounding mountains and low air movement, it has made air quality tougher here than most areas of the state. Therefore, the “Maricopa County Air Quality Department” has had to implement and now enforce tougher guidelines to meet these federal standards.

One of these standards is called the PM10. PM stands for “particulate matter”. The 10 is a measurement in micrometers that has to do with very fine particles like dust that can get airborne and affect air quality. Most golf facilities don’t produce much PM 10, however, the “Maricopa County Air Quality Department” is still looking for facilities to have a “dust control plan”. You are probably asking why should I have a dust control plan for my facility when I don’t produce PM 10 type dust in any of my operations? The reason is simple, it is the law.

Here is how the “Maricopa County Air Quality Department” is getting into your facility and requiring you to make up a plan. If you have a gasoline dispenser at your facility that is larger than 250 gallons, you must have a “General Permit” for Gasoline Dispensing Operations. With that permit, it allows the “Maricopa County Air Quality Department” to make certain requirements on dust control. In fact, if you read your permit, it will have about 13 pages devoted to the gasoline dispensing operation and 14 pages of the permit are devoted to dust control. It doesn’t make sense, but that is what you have. The point is this, read your permit and comply with it. If you don’t, they have the legal means to come on your property and enforce their rules on you for dust control, including fines for violations. Also remember, that most visits are generated by complaints. So if you keep your neighbors happy, you probably won’t see the “Maricopa County Air Quality Department”.

From my perspective and Cactus & Pine’s view, we don’t have much choice, so we better be ready to comply. After meeting with the County, it seems they are willing to keep this simple. They want to see a set of strategies, similar to what Cactus and Pine put out as “reduction strategies” for overseeding. It is a simple plan like that that the county wants to see at your facility to show you are aware that dust could be a problem and you are taking steps at your facility to keep it from getting airborne. Again, very simple, right? It is, but you have to take the time to read your permit, understand it and then write some strategies down. Cactus and Pine will be working on some “templates” we can use to plug in at your facility to help with your “dust control plan”. The permit you have now has many of these “strategies” already as part of the permit. Those are required. We will have more than that for the newsletter or an e-mail blast in the near future. Use the overseed “reduction strategies” to begin your plan. You can find it on the website at cactusandpine.org. That should be the beginning of your “dust control plan” and then we can add to it as we get more information out to you.

For those facilities outside Maricopa County, you are exempt for now. However, the word on the streets is Pinal County is going to have an air quality law in place similar to Maricopa very soon. Pima County will not be far behind.