



MEDIA RELEASE

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Green Up Your Holiday Clean Up & Give Up the Leaf Blower

Pima County, Ariz. - If cleaning up around the house for holiday guests involves removing fallen leaves on the porch or pathways in the yard, consider picking up a broom instead of a gas-powered leaf blower. The Pima County Department of Environmental Quality's Clean Air Program provides the following information about how our daily choices affect the air we breathe. Here are four reasons to avoid using a leaf blower:

- 1. Leaf blowers pollute the air.** Gas-powered lawn equipment like leaf blowers, emit pollutants such as carbon monoxide, particulate pollution (dust), carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxide, hazardous air pollutants and volatile organic compounds. These pollutants contribute to health problems that may affect homeowners, their families and the neighbors.
- 2. They are really noisy.** A normal, acceptable decibel level in residential areas is about 60 decibels. Leaf blowers generate about 70-75 decibels. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, this level of noise degrades quality of life by interfering with talking and sleeping, can reduce work accuracy, and can increase stress and aggravation. These negative effects can last for hours afterwards.
- 3. They kick up allergens and can trigger asthma episodes and lung problems.** Leaf blowers don't just move leaves. They stir up allergens, mold, animal feces and dust particles that were previously stabilized. According to the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, about five pounds of particulate matter per leaf blower per hour are blown into the air and can drift for days before settling out. Depending on the density of your neighborhood, your use of a leaf blower can affect you and up to 14 of your neighbors. These small particles can bypass your body's natural filter systems in your nose and throat and float down deep into your lungs, causing respiratory difficulties – especially in sensitive individuals.
- 4. They use gasoline when greener alternatives are available.** Rakes and brooms offer fossil fuel-free alternatives that will keep the air in your neighborhood healthier to breathe. The great thing about a broom is once you buy one, it won't cost you a penny to operate. And you even get a little exercise as you use it! An electric leaf blower is better than a gas-powered one because it does not emit engine pollution and is usually quieter; however, the generation of electricity does cause air pollution at the power plant.

For more information on actions you can take to be healthier and improve the environment, visit the Pima County Department of Environmental Quality's website at www.pima.gov/deq or call (520) 724-7446.

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Pima County Department of Environmental Quality (PDEQ) serves Pima County residents by protecting public health and the environment. PDEQ monitors air and water quality; provides hazardous and solid waste programs that ensures waste minimization and pollution prevention; assesses environmental compliance; processes environmental permits and plans; responds to public complaints and inquiries with investigations and enforcement; and reaches the community via public outreach, education, and citizens' assistance.

Real-time air quality information is available at http://webcms.pima.gov/government/environmental_quality/air/air_monitoring/

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