

**SUSANA MARTINEZ, GOVERNOR**

Butch Tongate, Cabinet Secretary

J.C. Borrego, Deputy Secretary

NEWS RELEASE*For Immediate Release***February 9, 2018***The Environment Department's mission is to protect and restore the environment and to foster a healthy and prosperous New Mexico for present and future generations.*

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NM Environment Dept. & Dept. of Transportation Alert

Doña Ana and Luna County Residents of Risks Associated with Dust Storms

Santa Fe – The New Mexico Environment Department and Department of Transportation, along with the cities of Las Cruces and Deming, and the counties of Doña Ana and Luna, is advising the citizens in those locales of the potential risks associated with dust storms.

A combination of factors including: weather conditions, features of the natural environment, and human activity, can contribute to high levels of windblown dust or dust storms. High winds can raise large amounts of dust from areas of dry, loose, exposed soil. In Southern New Mexico, high winds are most common during the spring.

Doña Ana and Luna counties typically experience 10 days a year when dust storms cause exceedances of the National Ambient Air Quality Standard for airborne particulate matter that is 10 microns or less in size – about 1/7 the diameter of a human hair. This standard was developed to protect the public's health and welfare.

While dust storms are a common occurrence in desert and semi-arid climates like Southern New Mexico, they can often present a number of hazards to public safety. The best precaution to take during a dust storm is simply to avoid going outside. If you must go outside, spend as little time outside as possible, avoid hard exercise and wear some type of covering over the nose and mouth to provide protection from larger dust particles.

Additionally, the Department of Transportation recommends the following precautions for motorists if they find themselves suddenly caught in a dust storm. Motorists should avoid driving in dust storm conditions. If motorists do find themselves driving in a dust storm they should pull off the roadway as soon as possible, completely exit the highway, turn off all vehicle lights and emergency flashers, set emergency brake and take their foot off the brake, and stay in the vehicle with the seatbelt buckled and wait for the storm to pass. For more information visit NMDOT's dust storm safety website at <https://www.take5stayalive.com/>.

For more information on the risks associated with dust storms please see New Mexico Environment Department's website at www.env.nm.gov/aqb or contact the department at 1-800-224-7009.

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.For your Twitter Feed: NM Env. Dept. Alerts Doña Ana and Luna County Residents of Risks Associated with Dust Storms www.env.nm.gov/aqb #NM, #NMED (more)

For your Facebook Feed: The New Mexico Environment Department and Department of Transportation, along with the cities of Las Cruces and Deming, and the counties of Doña Ana and Luna, is advising the citizens in those locales of the potential risks associated with dust storms. A combination of factors including: weather conditions, features of the natural environment, and human activity, can contribute to high levels of windblown dust or dust storms. Doña Ana and Luna counties typically experience 10 days a year when dust storms cause exceedances of the National Ambient Air Quality Standard for airborne particulate matter that is 10 microns or less in size – about 1/7 the diameter of a human hair. While dust storms are a common occurrence in desert and semi-arid climates like Southern New Mexico, they can often present a number of hazards to public safety. The best precaution to take during a dust storm is simply to avoid going outside. If you must go outside, spend as little time outside as possible, avoid hard exercise and wear some type of covering over the nose and mouth to provide protection from larger dust particles. www.env.nm.gov/aqb <https://www.take5stayalive.com/> #NM, #NMED

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