

What Everyone  
Should Know About  
**FUGITIVE DUST**



BOULDER COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

**BOULDER COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH**

3450 Broadway  
Boulder, CO 80304  
303-441-1564  
[www.BoulderCountyAir.org](http://www.BoulderCountyAir.org)

# What is Fugitive Dust?

Dust is made up of tiny, solid particles (“particulate matter”) floating in the air. Dust that is generated and released into the air as a direct result of human activity is known as “fugitive” particulate emissions, meaning that it has escaped from its place of origin. Dust blowing from construction sites, land development sites, gravel pits, mines, or from landscaping businesses are all indications that a fugitive dust issue may exist.

## Why should I be concerned about fugitive dust?

Airborne dust emissions can cause a number of serious health problems, and they can make some health problems worse. In addition, particle pollution can reduce visibility, carry other pollutants long distances, and damage property. The Clean Air Act requires the Environmental Protection Agency to set air quality standards to protect both public health and the public welfare. Particle pollution affects both.

### Health Effects

Exposure to particles can lead to a variety of serious health effects. Coarse particles (such as those found in wind blown dust) and fine particles (such as those found in smoke and haze) pose the greatest problems because they can get deep into the lungs. Scientific studies have linked particle pollution exposure to a variety of problems including:

- decreased lung function
- development of chronic bronchitis
- increased respiratory symptoms
- heartbeat irregularities
- heart attacks
- hospital admissions or emergency room visits for heart or lung disease

### Environmental Effects

Particles can be carried over long distances by wind and then settle on ground or water. The effects of this settling include:

- making lakes and streams acidic
- changing the nutrient balance in coastal waters and large river basins
- depleting the nutrients in soil
- damaging sensitive forests and farm crops
- affecting the diversity of ecosystems.



**Keep in mind that dust particles are illuminated and appear thicker when you are looking into the sun (this typically occurs in the early morning and evening hours).**

## How will I know if there is a problem?

The easiest way to tell if there is a problem is to determine if you see a lot of dust leaving the property of origin. Blowing dust so thick that it's hard to see the mountains, for instance, would indicate there is a problem.

## How does the government respond to fugitive dust?

Boulder County Public Health (BCPH) enforces the Colorado Air Quality Control Commission's Regulation No.1

This regulation states that every owner or operator of an activity that creates fugitive dust must use all practical measures or operating procedures necessary to minimize fugitive dust. With some exceptions, sources must prevent dust from leaving their property. Agricultural sources and properties less than 25 acres or projects shorter than six months in duration are exempt. Further, when winds are over 30 mph, sources are exempt from violating the regulation.

## How do I know dust control activities are being implemented?

A company trying to control dust will have water trucks in use and should be implementing some of the following dust control measures at the site:

- minimizing large dirt piles,
- stabilizing/crusting stock piles,
- laying gravel on haul roads,
- applying chemical dust suppressants,
- sweeping up mud that is tracked onto paved roads,
- utilizing snow fences,
- re-vegetating as they complete sections of the project.



## What can I do?

Dust emissions can be prevented! Your eyes can help us! Report dust events you witness to Boulder County Public Health at 303-441-1564 or online at [www.BoulderCountyAir.org](http://www.BoulderCountyAir.org).

Look for a sign on the property with contact information and call the responsible party to express your concerns. Additionally, if you have a digital camera, take a photo and send it to us. This will provide evidence of the problem and assist us in making recommendations on how to adequately correct it.

We appreciate your help in trying to improve the health and environment of our community by controlling the amount of fugitive dust in the air.