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Dust and dust storms: From physical processes to human health, safety, and welfare

Times Matter, the Impact of Convective Dust Events on Air Quality in the Greater Phoenix Area, Arizona

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**Key Points:**

- High PM₁₀ concentrations measured during short-duration convective dust events in the Phoenix area from July to August 2015 to 2021
- Convective dust events cause significant short-term spikes in PM₁₀ concentrations, often underreported by daily or hourly averages
- Comprehensive guidance is needed to assess short-term PM exposure for short-duration convective dust events that influence air quality

Supporting Information:

Supporting Information may be found in the online version of this article.

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Abstract Convective dust events are common in the greater Phoenix area over the summer. These short-duration dust events degrade the air quality and pose a potential health threat to millions. In this study, 93 convective dust events that occurred in July and August 2015 to 2021 were examined to determine their impact on air quality. Seven PM₁₀ stations were used to evaluate the changes in PM₁₀ concentrations over different time intervals (10-min, hourly, and daily). Out of these 93 dust events, only 15.1% had a daily average above the EPA PM₁₀ daily threshold, however, these daily concentrations were 12.8 and 28 times lower compared to hourly and 10-min concentrations (respectively) at the peak of the dust. 10-minute PM₁₀ concentrations were on average 2.2 ± 0.8 times higher than the hourly concentrations. The findings of this study demonstrated that the traditional methods that use daily or hourly averages underestimate the atmospheric PM₁₀ concentrations during short convective dust events and therefore lower the estimated exposure. There is a need to consider shorter time intervals to capture the PM concentrations accurately and highlight the importance of real-time monitoring and accurate characterization of short-duration events to assess their impacts on air quality and human health.

Plain Language Summary Convective dust events caused by thunderstorms often result in poor air quality and potential health risks to millions. This study examined 93 convective dust events in the greater Phoenix area, between July and August 2015 to 2021. Different PM₁₀ concentration time analyses (10-min, hourly, and daily average) were performed to understand their impact on air quality. The study found that traditional daily and hourly measurements significantly underestimate the concentration of PM₁₀ particles. Shorter time intervals (10-min) revealed much higher concentrations during the peak of dust events, on average 2.2 times higher than hourly concentrations. Only 15% of the events exceeded the daily air quality threshold, but particle concentrations during these shorter periods were far more concerning. These findings emphasize the need for real-time monitoring and shorter measurement intervals to accurately assess the health impacts of dust events and improve air quality assessments.

1. Introduction

Dust events are common in dry and semi-arid areas (Al Zubi et al., 2024; Goudie, 2014; Goudie & Middleton, 2006; Sissakian et al., 2013). Different elements can impact the generation of dust events, including wind speed, vegetation cover, rainfall amount, and soil moisture (Csavina et al., 2014; Kasey et al., 2019; Okin, 2022). The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) defines a dust event as an occurrence with an increase in wind speed that reduces horizontal vision to less than 10 km. In contrast, during dust storms visibility decreased to less than 1 km (World Meteorological Organization, 2019). Dust events and dust storms can be generated by synoptic and convective meteorological disturbances (Ardon-Dryer & Kelley, 2022; Middleton & Kang, 2017; Robinson & Ardon-Dryer, 2024).

Dust events play significant roles in several natural processes. They can influence the atmosphere's chemistry and climatic processes, alter soil and water properties, affect nutrient dynamics, ecosystems, agricultural output, and weather, and impact biogeochemical cycles in marine and terrestrial ecosystems (Akhlaiq et al., 2012; Hahnenberger & Nicoll, 2012; Middleton & Kang, 2017). Dust events can negatively affect agriculture by damaging crops removing fertile topsoil, and impairing food production (Middleton, 2019). High densities of microorganisms (fungi and bacteria), as well as plant pollens, have been observed during dust events (Elmassry et al., 2021; Jiang et al., 2003). Dust particles have also a direct and indirect impact on the climate, they reflect and absorb solar radiation (Lau et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2009), play a role as cloud condensation nuclei and ice nuclei particles (Ardon-Dryer & Levin, 2014; Chen et al., 2019; Kok et al., 2012), and even impact the atmosphere vertical electric field (Ardon-Dryer, Chmielewski, et al., 2022).

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Dust events are one of the most significant natural sources of atmospheric particulate matter (PM) (Shahsavani et al., 2012) mainly of PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} (defined as particulate matter with an aerodynamic diameter of up to 10 and 2.5 μm , respectively). During dust events, the concentrations of PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} can exceed the daily threshold level recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO; 45 and 15 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ for PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}, respectively; World Health Organization, 2022) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA; 150 and 35 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ for PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}, respectively; EPA, 2023). Studies found that dust events can also continue high concentrations of small particles even $<1 \mu\text{m}$ (Ardon-Dryer & Kelley, 2022; Ardon-Dryer, Kelley, et al., 2022). An increase in dust particle concentrations and changes in particle size and chemistry are considered the cause of health issues linked with dust events, these health issues include respiratory and cardiovascular illnesses (Herrera-Molina et al., 2024; Toure et al., 2019; Trianti et al., 2017), premature delivery, abnormal birthweight, and pregnancy-related toxemia (Bogan et al., 2021; Dastoorpoor et al., 2018; Jones, 2020), conjunctivitis, meningitis, and valley fever (Gorris et al., 2023; Hamza, 2021; Nhung et al., 2017; Tong et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2016). In extreme cases, exposure to dust particles even resulted in mortality (Díaz et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2020).

In the US one of the states that experiences frequent dust events and storms is Arizona (AZ) (Ardon-Dryer, Gill, & Tong, 2023; Mohebbi et al., 2019). Its proximity to the Sonoran and Chihuahuan Deserts and the Salt River Valley influences the North American Monsoon, leading to the formation of strong convective storms that exacerbate dust emission (Evan et al., 2022a, 2022b; Moreno-Rodríguez et al., 2015; Sandhu et al., 2024). Dust events in AZ are the third leading weather-related cause of death in the state (Beal, 2016). The strongest and most severe dust events in Arizona occur in the summer (Ardon-Dryer, Gill, & Tong, 2023; Clements et al., 2013; Foroutan & Pleim, 2017; Hyde et al., 2018; Sandhu et al., 2024). Most of the dust events last less than an hour (Raman et al., 2014; Sandhu et al., 2024), and many can even be shorter, $<20 \text{ min}$ (Nickling & Brazel, 1984). High PM concentrations are common during these dust events (Ardon-Dryer, Clifford, & Hand, 2023; Eagar et al., 2017; Huang et al., 2015; Raman et al., 2014; Sandhu et al., 2024). Higher daily average PM₁₀ concentrations were found during dust days ($57.0 \pm 48.9 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$) compared to non-dust days ($31.9 \pm 18.9 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$), some were even higher than the WHO or the EPA recommended daily thresholds (Sandhu et al., 2024). One of these strong dust events occurred on 5 July 2011, when PM₁₀ hourly concentrations reached $1,974 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ and the daily value was $225 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ (Raman et al., 2014). Eagar et al. (2017) examined different types of dust storms in the area from 2005 to 2014 and found that maximum PM₁₀ hourly concentrations during Haboob dust type were in many cases higher than $1,000 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$, in some cases, it was $>5,000 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$. Several studies also found an increase in PM_{2.5} concentration during dust events in the region (Huang et al., 2015; Sandhu et al., 2024). With these high hourly PM concentrations during dust events, we were wondering what the actual concentration of PM in the regions at the peak of the dust, mainly since many of these dust events will be shorter than an hour, can we speculate that the observation of PM which is based on daily and hourly basis will underestimate the concentrations of particles during these dust events and therefore their exposure and impact on human health.

Recent studies indicated that sub-daily exposure may unveil adverse health outcomes that are not observed or may be attenuated when only the daily level is measured and that hourly peak concentration may capture the health effects of ambient PM better than daily averages (Lin et al., 2017; Nguyen et al., 2024). Studies have shown health impact due to short-term exposures to high anthropogenic emissions (Behndig et al., 2006; Chen et al., 2015; Greven et al., 2012; Swiston et al., 2008). For example, Cheng et al. (2021) found aggravation of asthma rate in children in Australia within short (1-hr) exposure windows of PM_{2.5}. In China, Lin et al. (2017) found an association between the hourly peak of PM_{2.5} on cardiovascular mortality. However, most of these studies focus on anthropogenic emissions and not natural dust particles (e.g., Lin et al., 2017; Nguyen et al., 2024). To the best of our knowledge, no information is available on the health impact of short-term ($<1 \text{ hr}$) convective dust events, perhaps since most observation was based on daily and hourly values, which underestimated the impact of these dust events on PM concentrations and hence on human health. It is noteworthy that the health consequences of such intense but relatively short exposure to dust events are unclear and there are no established guidelines or universally accepted thresholds for evaluating short-term (15–60 min) exposures to PM (Griffiths et al., 2018).

2. Method and Materials

2.1. Research Area

The research was performed in the greater Phoenix area, which is located in Maricopa County in Arizona, U.S (shown in Figure 1). This urban area, which has a population of ~ 5 million people (US Census Bureau, 2022), is

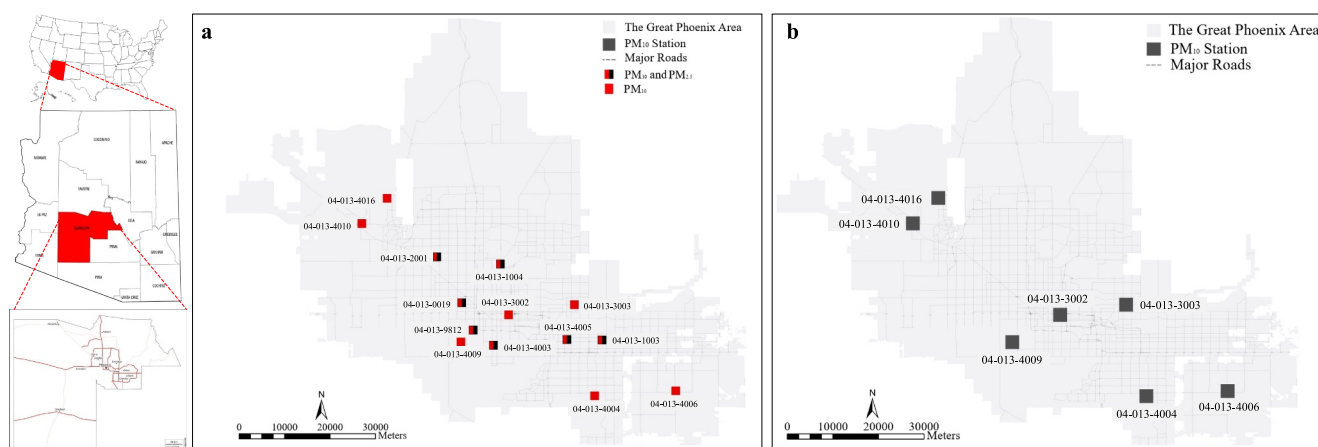


Figure 1. (a) Location of PM stations in the greater Phoenix area examined for the research, rectangle representing station's locations with PM_{10} (in red) and $PM_{2.5}$ (in black). (b) Spatial Distribution of PM_{10} stations utilized for this analysis.

located in the Sonoran Desert. It is defined as a hot and arid climate with an average annual precipitation of 211 mm (Maricopa County, 2022). Most of the precipitation occurs in the summer months due to the impact of the monsoon season.

2.2. Particulate Matter Measurement

Preprocessed (5-min values, which are instantaneous snapshots taken at 5-min intervals) PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$ measurements from 14 stations across the Greater Phoenix area were provided by the Maricopa County Air Quality Department (MCADQ) from 3 March 2015 to 31 December 2021. Seven stations had both PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$ and the remaining seven had only PM_{10} measurements. All measurements were at local times (UTC-7). Figure 1a Shows the locations of these stations and Table S1 in Supporting Information S1 provides information on each station. Each station was operated by the Tapered Element Oscillating Microbalance (TEOM) method. Seven stations utilized TEOM 1405-DF and the other seven used TEOM 1400ab. TEOM 1405-DF measures PM concentrations from 0 and up to $1,000,000 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ with a resolution of $0.1 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ and precision of $\pm 2.0 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ (for 1 hr averaged). TEOM 1400ab measures PM concentrations from 0 and up to $5,000,000 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ with a resolution of $0.1 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ and precision (for 1 hr averaged) of $\pm 1.5 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ (Thermo Scientific, 2009, 2019). It should be noted that TEOM monitors are not designed for less than hourly values (Thermo Scientific, 2009, 2019) and there are no Federal Equivalency Method (FEM) criteria for the 5-min time interval (Ronald Pope, MCADQ personal communication). Official (postprocessed) hourly PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$ values of the same stations were also retrieved from the EPA Pre-Generated Data for the same period (EPA, 2022). These official measurements were used to examine the quality of the preprocessed PM stations as the latter did not pass quality control (quality-assured or validated) and therefore was referred to as preprocessed values. MCADQ inspected and quality-assured the preprocessed values as they transferred to hourly values, following the EPA Quality Assurance guidelines (EPA, 2017) defined in Part 58 (Quality Assurance Requirements for Monitors used in Evaluations of National Ambient Air Quality Standards; EPA, 2024a) to make sure there were no invalidated values before these can be reported to EPA and became the official values presented in EPA Pre-Generated Data. The official EPA Pre-Generated Data provide hourly values without the ability to observe any fluctuation of PM during these hours (e.g., there is no information on hourly standard deviation), on the other hand, observation of the preprocessed PM data allows detection of these shorter time fluctuations, even intervals less than an hour (e.g., 10-min average).

2.2.1. Preparation of Particulate Matter (PM) Data

The first quality control step of the preprocessed (5-min) PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$ values included the removal of concentrations that were less than $-10 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$. Each of the stations contained negative values that ranged from -0.1 to $-1,065 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$. Although they represent a very low percentage of the total number of values used (3.0%, depending on the station). We were advised by MCADQ (Ira Domsy, MCADQ personal communication) to remove preprocessed negative values smaller than $-10 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ since the TEOM minimum detection limit for

hourly values is $-10 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$, and since the high negative 5-min values could be malfunction or instrument faults (Ray & Vaughn, 2009). The second quality control step required validation of the preprocessed PM_{10} and $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ values. Therefore, hourly averages calculated for each station were performed and compared to the official (postprocessed) EPA hourly PM_{10} and $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ values. This comparison evaluates which preprocessed stations could be used, and which were problematic and should be removed from future analysis. The evaluation was based on linear regression (commonly used for such analysis, Ardon-Dryer et al., 2020) and had >40,000 hr of comparison. Seven PM_{10} stations had high R^2 values (0.99–1.0), lower RMSE values that range from 0.6 to $2.7 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$, lower MAE values ($\sim 0.3 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$), and a slope of 1.0. between the preprocessed and the official EPA stations. A small difference was observed between hourly values, the difference was on average $\sim 0.5 \pm 1.4 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$. On average 0.7% of the hourly values had a difference of $>1.0 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ for PM_{10} values, which made us confident in using these seven preprocessed stations for the analysis. The remaining PM_{10} stations had lower R^2 values (ranging from 0 to 0.82), with various RMSE, MAE, and slope values (shown in Figure S1 in Supporting Information S1). For example, three PM_{10} stations that had higher R^2 values (R^2 0.79–0.82), had RMSE values that ranged from 12.3 to $23 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$, MAE values from 3.3 to $7.6 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$, and slope from 0.8 to 0.9, making them look good compared to the official stations. But when we examine the difference in PM_{10} hourly concentrations between the preprocessed to the official PM values, some hours had high differences in concentrations ($>2,000 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$) and there seems to be a shift in values as they did not align. Four $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ stations had low R^2 values (ranging from 0 to 0.05), with high RMSE, MAE, and lower slopes. Three of the $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ stations had high R^2 values (0.84–0.89), lower RMSE values that range from 2.4 to $3.0 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$, lower MAE values ($1.3 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$), and also higher slope (at 0.9), but when the observation was based on the difference of hourly values of the two, some hourly values had high concentrations in one compared to the other (up to $200 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$). On average 58% of the hourly values had a $1.0 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ difference in $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ values. Based on this comparison we decided to include only the seven preprocessed PM_{10} stations that pass the quality comparisons and to remove the remaining stations from any future analysis. These findings were not suppressing as indicated by Ronald Pope (MCADQ personal communication) who stated that the 5-min PM_{10} data (TEOM 1400ab) tend to be the most reliable and in agreement with the official hourly value, while stations with both PM_{10} and $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ (TEOM 1405-DF), tend to be less accurate at the 5-min interval. The locations of the selected seven PM_{10} stations are shown in Figure 1b. Additional calculations were made to each of these seven preprocessed stations including 10-min, and daily averages.

2.3. Meteorological Data

Meteorological Aerodrome Reports (METARs) from the Iowa Environmental Mesonet reported by the National Weather Service (NWS) in the Automated Surface Observation System (ASOS) were retrieved from Nine different ASOS stations located in the greater Phoenix area (Iowa State University, 2021). The ASOS data contained 5-min to hourly meteorological measurements including wind speed and wind direction, visibility, and Present Weather Code. The ASOS data was retrieved from 3 March 2015 to 31 December 2021, and times were converted to Local Time (LT; UTC-7). Table S2 in Supporting Information S1 provides information on each of the ASOS units used in this study, and Figure S2 in Supporting Information S1 shows the locations of the ASOS units with the PM stations.

2.4. Software and Statistical Analysis Used

Different calculations were made using Excel and MATLAB, these included hourly, and daily average \pm standard deviation (SD) values. In order to examine the similarities between the preprocessed and the official EPA station, comparisons were performed using MATLAB and Excel. These comparisons included R-squared (R^2), Root-Mean-Square Error (RMSE), Mean Absolute Error (MAE) values, as well as the best-fit information including the slope and intercept.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Examining PM Concentrations During Dust Events

Using the greater Phoenix area dust events database (Sandhu et al., 2024), we were able to identify 192 dust events that occurred between 3 March 2015 to 31 December 2021 (a period when preprocessed PM values were available). Since we were interested in examining the PM concentration during short-duration dust events, we

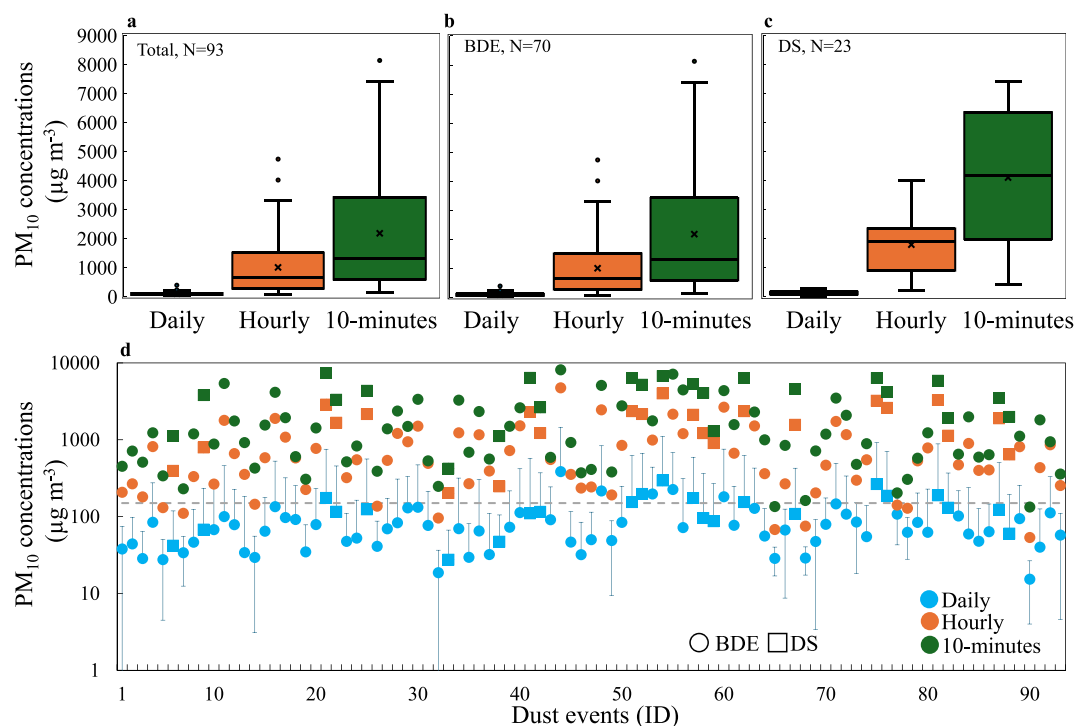


Figure 2. Comparison of PM₁₀ concentrations for Daily, hourly, and 10-min concentrations based on Box plot for (a) the entire dust events, (b) Blowing Dust Events (BDE), and (c) Dust storms (DS). (d) Comparison of PM₁₀ concentrations for each of the dust events based on 10-min (green), hourly (orange), and daily average concentrations \pm SD (light blue). Dash gray lines represent the EPA PM₁₀ daily threshold of 150 $\mu\text{g m}^{-3}$, circles represent BDE and squares represent DS.

decided to focus on summer convective dust events, which are short (<1 hr) and occur mainly in July and August (Sandhu et al., 2024). A total of 123 convective dust events occurred in the greater Phoenix area from 2015 to 2021, 93 of these dust events occurred during July–August which were of interest for this work. 24% of these 93 dust events were in 2018 while 8.6% of these dust events were in either 2019 or 2020. An equal number of events occurred in July versus August. 67.7% of the dust events occurred between 18:00 to 23:00 LT. Most of the dust events (70, 75.3%) were Blowing Dust Events (BDE) with visibility below 10 km but above 1 km, while 23 of the dust events (24.7%) were defined as dust storms (DS) with visibility <1 km. See Sandhu et al. (2024) for definitions of BDE and DS and the differences between these severity dust events.

All the PM₁₀ stations that were active during each dust event were examined, and the station with the maximum hourly concentrations was selected to represent the PM₁₀ concentrations during the dust event. The daily PM₁₀ concentrations of these 93 dust events ranged from $15.3 \pm 11.3 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ (on 11 August 2021; defined as BDE with visibility ≥ 8 km) and up to $385 \pm 1,068 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ (on 8 July 2018; defined as BDE with visibility ≥ 1.2 km). The average of all the daily values was $92.8 \pm 64 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ with a mode of $67.7 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$. The hourly PM₁₀ concentrations of these 93 dust events ranged from $53.5 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ (on 11 August 2021) and up to $4,729 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ (on 8 July 2018). The average of all the daily values was $998 \pm 948 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ with a mode of $2,351 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$. The 10-min average of PM₁₀ ranged from $133 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ (on 11 August 2021) up to $8,129 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ (on 8 July 2018). The average of the 10-min PM₁₀ concentrations at the peak of the dust for all 93 dust events was $2,174 \pm 2,064 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ with a mode of $6,335 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$. Observations of the difference between the daily, hourly, and 10-min averages of PM₁₀ concentrations were performed for each of the 93 dust events (Figure 2a). The hourly values at the peak of the dust were on average 9.4 ± 4.4 times higher than the daily average, these values range from 1.3 up to 20.8. The 10-min values at the peak of the dust were on average 20.5 ± 13 times higher than the daily average, these values range from 1.4 up to 62. The 10-min values at the peak of the dust were on average 2.2 ± 0.8 times higher than the hourly values, these values range from 1.0 up to 4.8. Most of the dust events (87%) had 10-min values that were 2 times higher compared to hourly values, and 38% of the dust events had 10-min values that were 3 times higher compared to hourly values. 80% of the events had 10-min values that were 10 times higher than the daily values.

Almost all dust events (99%) had hourly values that were 2 times higher compared to daily values, and 49% of the dust events had hourly values that were 10 times higher compared to daily values.

A similar examination was performed based on the severity of the dust. The daily PM_{10} values for the 70 BDE ranged from $15.3 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ (on 11 August 2021) up to $385 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ (on 8 July 2018). The average daily PM_{10} concentrations of the BDE were $79.8 \pm 57.7 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$. The hourly PM_{10} values for the 70 BDE ranged from $53.5 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ (on 11 August 2021) up to $4,729 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ (on 8 July 2018). The average hourly PM_{10} concentrations of the BDE was $737 \pm 761 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$. 10-minute concentrations at the peak of the dust for the BDE ranged from $133 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ up to $8,129 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$, average concentration of these times was $1,540 \pm 1,623 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$. The comparisons between these different times for all BDE are presented in Figure 2b. 83% of the BDE events had 10-min concentrations that were 2 times higher compared to hourly values, 34% of the BDE had 10-min concentrations that were 3 times higher compared to hourly values (the average between these concentrations 2.1 ± 0.7 times). Most of the BDE (74%) had 10-min values that were 10 times higher compared to daily values (the average between these concentrations was 18 ± 11.7 times). Almost all the BDE (98.6%) had hourly values that were 2 times higher compared to daily values, and 18.6% of them had hourly values that were 10 times higher compared to daily values (the average between these concentrations was 8.3 ± 4). The daily PM_{10} values for the 23 DS ranged from $27.5 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ (on 21 July 2017; defined as DS with visibility of 0.8 km) up to $295 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ (on 7 August 2018; defined as DS with visibility of 0.8 km). The average daily PM_{10} concentration of the DS was $132 \pm 67 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$. The hourly PM_{10} values for the DS ranged from $202 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ up to $4,007 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$, while the average hourly PM_{10} concentration was $1,794 \pm 1,031 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$. The 10-min concentrations at the peak of the dust storms ranged from $423 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ up to $7,400 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ (on 29 July 2016; defined as DS with visibility of 0 km), the average concentration of the 10-min was $4,102 \pm 2,095 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$. A comparison of PM_{10} concentrations at the different times during the DS is presented in Figure 2c. 95.7% of the DS events had 10-min concentrations that were 2 times higher compared to hourly values, on average PM_{10} concentrations 10-min values at the peak of the dust were 2.5 ± 0.9 times higher than the hourly average. All the DS had 10-min values that were 15 times higher compared to daily values. On average 10-min PM_{10} concentrations values at the peak of the dust were 31.5 ± 12 times higher than the daily average, these ranged from 14.7 up to 58.2. All the DS had hourly values that were 5 times higher compared to daily values, average hourly PM_{10} concentrations values at the peak of the dust were 12.9 ± 3.5 times higher than the daily average values, these ranged from 2.5 up to 20.8. A comparison between these different times for the DS is presented in Figure 2c. Observations of daily, hourly, and 10-min PM_{10} concentrations of each of the dust events presented in Figure 2d show the variability among the PM_{10} concentrations. These large differences between the 10-min PM_{10} concentrations compared to those observed for daily and even for the hourly values highlight the fact that observations based on daily and hourly times will underestimate the PM_{10} concentration regardless of whether it was a BDE or a DS.

Observations of the increase of PM_{10} concentrations of each of the dust events were performed based on the difference of PM_{10} concentrations at the peak of the dust from the concentration recorded right before (also defined as background) the dust reaches (and recorded by) the station. These differences were performed based on two times hourly and 10-min measurements. Observations of hourly PM_{10} concentrations before the dust were on average $33.2 \pm 29.9 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$, while observations based on 10-min before the dust were similar, with an average of $36.1 \pm 15.8 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$. However, the increase in PM_{10} concentrations was different. It was $965 \pm 944 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ based on hourly values and $2,138 \pm 2,064 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ based on 10-min values. PM_{10} concentrations at the peak of the dust were on average 79.3 ± 137 times higher compared to the times before the dust (background) based on 10-min values, lower values were found when observations were made based on hourly values (37.1 ± 37.2 times). These differences highlight the significance that observations based on 10-min have during such short-term dust events, as it highlights the significant impact of exposure to such high particle concentration at such short times.

Most of the dust events (85%) examined were below the EPA PM_{10} daily threshold, and only 15% had a daily average above the EPA PM_{10} daily threshold ($150 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$). Out of the days above the EPA daily threshold, 36% were BDE and 64% were DS. The average hourly values for these 14 days with PM_{10} daily values $>150 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ was $2,708 \pm 905 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$, and the average of 10-min PM_{10} values was $5,737 \pm 1,609 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$, 12.8 and 28 times above the daily values (hourly and 10-min, respectively). The highest hourly PM_{10} value for these days was $4,729 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$, while the 10-min PM_{10} value was $8,129 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$. However, 79 days had PM_{10} daily values below the EPA PM_{10} daily threshold, PM_{10} concentrations based on hourly ($695 \pm 553 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$), and 10-min ($1,542 \pm 1,382 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$) values were 8.8 and 20 times above the EPA daily threshold (respectively). For example, 11 August 2015, had daily values of $67.7 \pm 166 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$, hourly concentrations during this dust storm

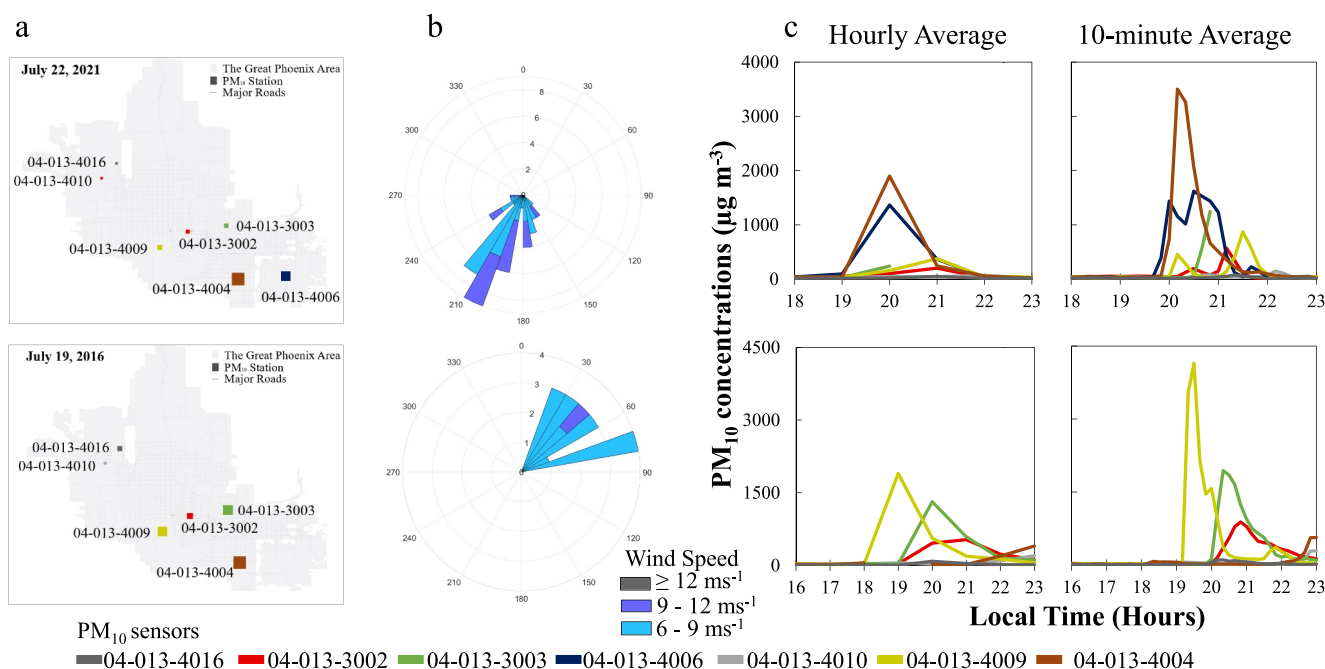


Figure 3. Example of two dust events that did not exceed the EPA daily threshold along with spatial distribution of the PM₁₀ stations, rectangle size represents the maximum hourly values measured. (b) A wind rose during dust times and (c) distribution of hourly and 10-min average of PM₁₀ values for each of the stations.

went up to 793 μg m⁻³ while 10-min concentrations went up to 3,788 μg m⁻³ (10-min concentrations were 56 times and 4.8 times higher compared to the daily and hourly values, respectively). Observations were also made based on the updated WHO PM₁₀ daily threshold (45 μg m⁻³). Only 20% of the dust events (19 dust events) presented were below the WHO PM₁₀ daily threshold. However close look at these dust events reveals that many had very high hourly and 10-min PM₁₀ concentrations. On average the PM₁₀ concentrations of these 19 dust events were 209 ± 117 μg m⁻³ and 523 ± 407 μg m⁻³ based on hourly and 10-min values, respectively. Hourly and 10-min values were 4.6 and 11.6 times higher compared to daily values (respectively). To highlight this difference 31 August 2016, the dust event had daily values of 41.0 ± 46.3 μg m⁻³, hourly concentrations during this dust went up to 136 μg m⁻³ while 10-min concentrations went up to 390 μg m⁻³. If observations were only based on days above the EPA or WHO PM₁₀ daily threshold, many of these days would have gone under the radar and would not be flagged as problematic days with high PM concentrations and therefore with potential health impacts.

3.2. Spatial Impacts of Dust Event on PM Concentrations

The examination of PM concentrations during dust storms and events presented in the previous Section 3.1 was based on one station with the highest recorded PM₁₀ concentrations, however, most of the dust events had multiple stations with high hourly PM₁₀ concentrations (>100 μg m⁻³). Most of the dust events (90%) had an increase in hourly PM₁₀ concentrations by multiple stations, regardless of whether the dust events were defined as BDE or DS. 34.4% of dust events observed an increase of PM₁₀ concentrations (>100 μg m⁻³) in all of the active PM stations, 35% of them were defined as DS. Two dust events were selected to present the behavior and spatial and temporal changes of PM₁₀ concatenations during the dust events. One is defined as DS, and one is defined as BDE. These two dust events remained below the EPA PM₁₀ daily threshold. Locations of each station and changes of PM₁₀ concentrations based on hourly and 10-min averages as well as Windrose (highlighting the movement of the dust particles) during these dust events presented in Figure 3.

On 19 July 2016, dust event only six of the PM₁₀ stations were active, and four stations detected the dust particles. During this event, the lowest visibility value recorded was 1.6 km, defining it as BDE. The daily average for the four stations that experience the dust events ranges from 84 ± 134 μg m⁻³ for 04-013-3002 up to 135 ± 393 μg m⁻³ for 04-013-4004. The dust was generated by a thunderstorm that originated southeast of the

area, and the dust particles moved northwest reaching first station 04-013-4004 at 19:20 LT. The PM_{10} 10-min average concentration was $3,533 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$, 63 times higher compared to concentrations measured just 10-min earlier ($56 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$). Station 04-013-4009 detected the dust 30 min later at 19:50 LT when 10-min average concentrations increased from 41 to $161 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$. By 20:10 both stations 04-013-3003 and 04-013-3002 detected the dust. Station 04-013-4004 had its peak PM_{10} concentration at 19:30 with 10-min PM_{10} values of $4,147 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ (74 times higher than before the dust, just 20 min earlier). The other stations had lower PM_{10} concentrations at their peak with 2,024, 1,940, and $884 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ for 04-013-4009, 04-013-3003, and 04-013-3002, respectively. Hourly values at the peak of the dust were 1.5–2.2 times lower than the peak based on the 10-min average. It took time for each of the stations to get back to background concentration. The duration of the event (when PM was high) exceeded 3.5 hr in total. Among the observed stations, station 04-013-3003 had the longest exposure, lasting for 3 hr. Conversely, station 04-013-4004 experienced the event for the shortest duration, which amounted to 1.5 hr. Stations 04-013-4011 and 04-013-4016 remained unaffected by the presence of dust particles throughout the entire duration of the event, as they did not see any increase in PM_{10} concentrations.

The second dust event was on 22 July 2021, it was defined as a DS as visibility by one of the meteorological ASOS stations reported on 0.8 km. All seven PM_{10} were active that day, but only five of them were able to detect the dust particles. One station (04-013-3003) stopped its operation during the dust event. None of the stations exceeded the EPA daily threshold for PM_{10} , the highest daily PM_{10} concentrations measured was $123 \pm 381 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ (by station 04-013-4004). The dust came from the southwest and traveled through the northeast with greater impact on stations 04-013-4004 and 04-013-4006. The initial detection of the dust event occurred by station 04-013-4006 at 19:50 LT, where PM_{10} concentrations rapidly increased from 34 to $388 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ within a span of just 10-min. As the dust propagated, additional stations within the area began detecting its presence. Consecutively, station 04-013-4004 detected dust at 20:00 as PM_{10} concentrations increased from 60 to $733 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$. In only 10-min the sensor reached a peak with $3,502 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$. Station 04-013-4004 reached its peak much faster than 04-013-4006, which had concentrations $>1,000 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ for 30 min until it reached the maximum PM_{10} concentrations of $1,620 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$. Interestingly these high PM_{10} concentrations $>1,000 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ continued even after the peak, and they lasted for a total of one hour. Stations 04-013-3003, 04-013-3002, and 04-013-4009, detected the dust at 20:40, 21:00, and 21:10 LT respectively. Some of the stations observed the dust for durations exceeding 2 hr. Each of the stations exhibited a distinct timing for its peak concentration. The maximum 10-min PM_{10} concentrations measured during the peak of the dust event varied across the area, ranging from $569 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ (by station 04-013-3002) up to $3,502 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ (by station 04-013-4004). On average, the peak PM_{10} concentrations across the stations that actively detected the dust was $1,562 \pm 1,154 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$. The maximum hourly PM_{10} concentrations during the peak of the dust event ranged from $202 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ (by station 04-013-3002) to $1,900 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ (by station 04-013-4004). Comparing the maximum concentrations recorded based on 10-min averages to those based on hourly values revealed that the hourly PM_{10} concentrations were 1.2–5.2 times lower than the corresponding 10-min averages.

3.3. Impact and Implication of These Short Dust Events With High PM Concentrations

Short convective dust events have been documented across the world. Such dust events have been observed in Africa mainly in the Sahel and Sahara area (Kaly et al., 2015; Marticorena et al., 2010; Pantillon et al., 2015; Roberts & Knippertz, 2014), in the Middle East, including Iran (Firouzabadi et al., 2019; Karami et al., 2017), Israel (Crouvi et al., 2017) the Arabian Peninsula (Anisimov et al., 2018; Miller et al., 2008), at South Asia in India (Banerjee et al., 2021) as well as in central and north Asia (Takemi, 1999) and in Australia (Strong et al., 2011). Short convective dust events have been observed across the U.S. in the Southern High Plains, including Oklahoma, Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico (Kasey et al., 2019), and Texas (Chen & Fryrear, 2002; Robinson & Ardon-Dryer, 2024; Robinson et al., 2024), as well as in Western U.S. in Utah (Hahnenberger & Nicoll, 2014), California (Lei & Wang, 2014) and Arizona (Raman et al., 2014; Sandhu et al., 2024; Vukovic et al., 2014).

Several studies of convective dust events (e.g., Ardon-Dryer & Kelley, 2022; Bouet et al., 2019; Marticorena et al., 2010; Vukovic et al., 2014) also found much higher PM concentration when the observations were made at short-time intervals (5- or 10-min). In the study conducted by Bouet et al. (2019), in Tunisia, the daily mean PM_{10} concentration during a convective dust event was $125 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$, while the 5-min concentration was extremely higher ($3,398 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$), 27 times higher than the daily average. Marticorena et al. (2010) observed a high 5-min PM_{10} concentration during convective dust in Mali (Western Africa), PM_{10} concentration increased by two orders

of magnitude in less than 10-min, and the 5-min average values reached up to $14,000 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$. In Phoenix Arizona, Vukovic et al. (2014) presented PM_{10} concentration from the 5 July 2011 dust storm, the 5-min average at the peak of the dust reached $9,000 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$, while hourly PM_{10} concentrations were $\sim 5,000 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$. In Lubbock Texas, Ardon-Dryer and Kelley (2022) measured PM_{10} concentration during two convective dust events (June 5 and 21, 2019) and found hourly PM_{10} concentrations of 280 and $230 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$, respectively. These hourly concentrations were 4–5 times lower compared to the 10-min values ($1,403$ and $927 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$, respectively). Convective dust events are known to be localized and impact a smaller area. Some of these short-term convective dust events might impact only one part of the city but not another. The two examples presented in Figure 3 highlight the spatial and temporal changes of PM_{10} concatenations during the convective summer dust events in the greater Phoenix area. As shown in Figure 3 and described in Sandhu et al. (2024) the spatial impact of some of these convective dust events was very localized, impacting only a few of the cities in the greater Phoenix area or even just some neighborhoods. For example, Vukovic et al. (2014) found variability in PM_{10} concentration across stations in the Phoenix area of almost two orders of magnitude during the 5 July 2011, dust storm. These findings indicate how localized some of these dust events could be. Such findings have been observed in previous studies in this region (Raman et al., 2014; Sandhu et al., 2024). Since many studies examine the health effects during dust events using zip codes, these localized effects should be taken into account and considered, mainly if the zip code area is bigger than the area impacted by the dust event.

Many studies found that exposure to dust particles during dust events (BDE and DS) has a negative impact on human health. These impacts include an impact on blood pressure levels (Ishii et al., 2020), cause of cardiovascular disease (Domínguez-Rodríguez et al., 2021; Herrera-Molina et al., 2024), stroke (Herrera-Molina et al., 2024), and respiratory diseases including asthma and acute bronchitis (Crooks et al., 2016; Grineski et al., 2011; Hefflin et al., 1994; Herrera-Molina et al., 2021; Rublee et al., 2020), which could lead to mortality (Crooks et al., 2016; Domínguez-Rodríguez et al., 2021; Seihei et al., 2024; Stafoggia et al., 2016). However, not all studies showed a health impact, or at least a significant one, as summarized by Zhang et al. (2016). Some differences could be attributed to different definitions or methods used to identify the dust events. Some studies used the PM_{10} daily average to define a day as a dust event when the health impact of dust events was examined. For example, in Kuwait Al-Taiar and Thalib (2014) defined dust storm days when the daily PM_{10} concentrations exceeded $200 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$. Shahsavani et al. (2020) defined dust days in Iran when daily PM_{10} concentrations were $>150 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$. Rublee et al. (2020) indicate that daily PM_{10} concentrations of $400 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ will define a severe dust storm in the U.S. In this study, none of the dust events had a daily average above $400 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ threshold, and only a small portion of dust events examined (5.4%) had a daily average $>200 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$. Many studies used daily average PM concentration when examining the impact of dust on health (Badeenezhad et al., 2020; Crooks et al., 2016; Ishii et al., 2020; Rublee et al., 2020; Stafoggia et al., 2016). The usage of daily PM values has been questioned by Staniswalis et al. (2005) who suggested that the daily average, which reflects the total daily dose, may obscure the hourly resolution of the dose rate, lead to a loss of information on high acute exposure which may lead to underestimating of the impact the particles will have on people health, similar to the findings presented in this study. Recent studies used daily maximum PM concentration based on hourly values (Herrera-Molina et al., 2021, 2024). In El Paso, Texas Herrera-Molina et al. (2021) used PM_{10} hourly concentration $>100 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ to identify dust events. Other differences between the studies could be based on the methods used to define the dust event itself, some studies used horizontal visibility values based on meteorological stations to identify the dust days (Ishii et al., 2020), while others used weather codes along with visibility values (Grineski et al., 2011). Some studies used back trajectory maps and PM concentrations to identify dust events (Samoli et al., 2011). In Cyprus, Middleton et al. (2008) used a combination of PM_{10} hourly concentration $>100 \mu\text{g m}^{-3}$ and weather codes to identify dust storm days. Some studies used the NWS Storm Events Database (Crooks et al., 2016; Jones, 2020; Rublee et al., 2020), however, a recent study questioned the reliability of this database and suggested that it should be used with caution as its potential limitations might affect the findings (Ardon-Dryer, Clifford, & Hand, 2023).

Another difference could be exposure term, these health impacts of dust events were examined in both short-term (Badeenezhad et al., 2020; Herrera-Molina et al., 2024; Ishii et al., 2020; Moreira et al., 2020; Rublee et al., 2020; Stafoggia et al., 2016) and long-term (Jones, 2020; Seihei et al., 2024). Short-term, also known as acute exposure, is normally defined as exposure on the day of the dust (known as lag 0) and up to several days after the dust, short-term may cause immediate and severe damage. Long-term, which is also known as chronic or persistent exposure may last for months or years and lead to permanent illnesses or injuries. Most of the studies that found a health impact due to exposure to dust (BDE/DS) found a short-term impact (Achilleos et al., 2019; Shahsavani

et al., 2020). For example, Samoli et al. (2011) found a higher impact on children's asthma during dust days (lag 0), while Herrera-Molina et al. (2024) found a higher hospitalization rate for asthma on the day of the dust but for acute respiratory disease only 4 days after the dust. However, there are different definitions for short-term exposure. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) defines short-term exposure as the average exposure in which a person may be exposed typically for 15–30 min (Occupational Safety and Health Administration, 2024). EPA has a longer definition with time exposure of more than 24 hr, up to 30 days (EPA, 2011), although acute exposure guideline levels defined by EPA have relatively short exposure periods of 10 min, 30 min, 1 hr, 4 hr, and 8 hr which are differentiated from air standards that are based on longer or repeated exposures (EPA, 2024b).

The interpretation of sub-daily PM data and their practical applications to public health remains uncertain (Nguyen et al., 2024). The utilization of short-term observations, predominantly focused on 1-hr timescales, has emerged as a pivotal approach in elucidating the implications of episodic air pollution events on exposure to particulate matter mainly from anthropogenic pollutant sources (Brilli et al., 2021; Deary & Griffiths, 2021; Griffiths et al., 2018). There is a need to develop comprehensive guidance for assessing short-term PM exposure (Deary & Griffiths, 2021). Deary and Griffiths (2024) highlight the need to establish a 1-hr guideline value for PM to facilitate timely public health interventions, highlighting the need to review the regulatory and technical controls. Deary and Griffiths (2024) focus on industrial urban fire, while Deary and Griffiths (2021) provide observations of dust storms in Arizona and New Mexico. Although the hourly values represented the dust events in a better way than the daily values, yet, as shown in this study, even the hourly PM₁₀ values underestimate the true exposure and potential health impact of the dust particles. Our findings show that 10-min concentrations were 2 times higher than hourly values, and 20 times higher than daily values. Perhaps sub-hourly guidelines will be more efficient in this case as they will allow us to evaluate the health consequences of such intense short-exposure dust events (Griffiths et al., 2018). Bouet et al. (2019) indicate that the health consequences of short exposure to intense dust events require the spatial definition of air quality standards, which should account for the intermittency of dust emission, mainly in regions where such phenomena strongly control the air quality, as the one presented here for the greater Phoenix area. The finding from this study highlights the fact that convective dust events (BDE and DS) have much higher particle concentrations than expected. The impact of such dust events on air quality and people's health might be higher than we estimate. These issues have been raised by Ardon-Dryer, Clifford, and Hand (2023) who indicated that daily averages and hourly values may mask the severity and true impact of such dust events. It is therefore suggested that relying solely on daily or hourly observations may lead to an underestimation of the impacts of these convective dust events. The standard temporal resolutions currently used do not adequately capture the true magnitude of these dust events highlight the importance of real-time monitoring that can capture particle concentrations every 5- to 10-min, which will help to accurately characterize these short-duration dust events and will help assess their impacts on air quality and human health.

4. Conclusions

This study focused on the behavior and changes in PM₁₀ concentrations during 93 short-duration convective dust events in the greater Phoenix area during the summer months of July and August from 2015 to 2021. Comparison of these dust events based on daily, hourly, and 10-min average concentrations reveals how daily but also hourly averages mask the atmospheric PM₁₀ concentration during the peak of these dust events. PM₁₀ concentrations during the peak of the dust events were significantly higher based on 10-min intervals compared to hourly (on average 2.2 ± 0.8 times higher) and daily (on average 20.5 ± 13 times higher) values. Most of these dust events were below the EPA daily threshold and would have passed under the radar not considered as days with potential health impacts. Two specific dust events were selected to examine the temporal and spatial variations in PM₁₀ concentrations using multiple stations. These dust events highlight how localized some of these dust events could be, impacting only a small part of the area. The high 10-min PM₁₀ concentrations during the peak of the dust (compared to daily and hourly averages) were observed by multiple stations regardless of whether the dust events were categorized as DS (visibility <1 km) or as BDE (visibility ranging from 1 to 10 km). The duration and spatial distribution of dust propagation exhibited remarkable heterogeneity across the analyzed events, shedding light on the intricate and multifaceted dynamics inherent in these dust events. Highlights the importance of real-time monitoring and accurate characterization of short-duration dust events to assess their impacts on air quality and human health.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest relevant to this study.

Data Availability Statement

Preprocessed (5-min) PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} measurements were provided by the Maricopa County Air Quality Department (MCADQ). Official (postprocessed) hourly PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} values were retrieved from the EPA Pre-Generated Data for the same period (EPA, 2022). Meteorological data were retrieved from Iowa State University (2021). A list of dust events can be found in Sandhu et al. (2024).

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