

Worst Smog In 2 Years Hits City And Lingers On

By **BOB STIRLING**

The worst smog measured here in two years hit Tucson yesterday and the tail ends of it were still lying around today in spite of a wind.

Dr. James E. McDonald, University of Arizona Institute of Atmospheric Physics official, said: "Yesterday, it was really awful."

And, he said, nobody can yet say with real authority what causes the smog for sure.

Visibility was cut to three miles yesterday, he said. Usually you can see from 50 to 100 miles in Tucson.

The air was lying in a layer yesterday, cooler at the bottom than at the top, and this "put a lid on the air pollutants" so they couldn't escape and be blown away, McDonald said.

Tucson and Phoenix, during the winter, regularly have

these inverted layers of air and this sets up an ideal condition for smog.

Los Angeles also has these air inversions and that's why they have smog so much.

Tucson and Phoenix, however, have an advantage, he said. Usually the sun burns through and removes "the lid" by heating the ground and the lower air.

The Los Angeles inversions cover a much larger area and aren't as easily removed, he said.

Another point, however, giving Los Angeles some advantage over Tucson and Phoenix is that their blanket of air under "the lid" is usually about 1,500 feet thick. This gives them more air to mix the pollutants with before conditions get really rough on the eyeballs and visibility.

Tucson and Phoenix have their "lids" clamped on

tighter so that we have very little air to mix pollutants with under "the lid" before the smog builds up in our eyeballs and lungs.

Smelter smoke, dust, automobile exhaust fumes, burning of oil and trash and other visible and invisible possible sources may or may not be the real cause of smog, McDonald said.

"The source? All I can say with assurance is that it's a subtle and baffling problem," McDonald said.

No one should go off half-cocked on assuming what the source of smog is, he said. We in Tucson and Phoenix can learn a great deal from California's experiences where millions have been spent on studies of the problem.

"It's a problem that's going to be with us for years and years," McDonald said.