

# Environmental Justice Fact Sheet

Environmental Protection Agency

Region 7 Iowa Kansas Missouri Nebraska

*"...all Americans deserve to be protected from pollution - not just those who can afford to live in the cleanest, safest communities. All Americans deserve clean air, pure water, land that is safe to live on, and food that is safe to eat. Protecting our environment means protecting our health - the health of our families, our neighborhoods, our economy, and our children."*

--- Carol Browner, Administrator EPA

## Environmental Justice:

adjective [en·vi·ron·men·tal • jus·tice]

Environmental Justice (EJ) means the fair treatment of people regardless of race, income, and culture, in the developing, carrying-out, and enforcing of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Fair treatment means, no person or group should bear a greater share of negative environmental impacts that result from environmental programs.

### Why should Environmental Justice concern you?

Communities are sometimes unaware of their rights and opportunities to participate in environmental decision-making. The EJ movement was often called "community activism" before being formally recognized by the federal government. In 1982, the EJ movement grew out of a grassroots protest against the placement of a PCB landfill in a predominately African-American community in Warren County, North Carolina. This protest led to an investigation by the government's General Accounting Office, which found that there was a link between the placement of hazardous waste landfills and the race of the communities where the landfills are to be located.

Examples of common Environmental Injustices:

- Landfill placement in low-income or minority neighborhoods.
- Contaminated or inadequate drinking water supply.
- Increased industrial presence and exposure to potentially toxic and hazardous materials.

### How did EPA become involved with the Environmental Justice movement?

On February 11, 1994, President Clinton issued Executive Order 12898, "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations." This Order was to focus federal attention on the environmental and human health conditions to develop an EJ Strategy. As a result, Region 7 has developed an EJ Strategy that identifies and addresses unfair environmental effects in programs, policies, and activities in minority and low-income populations.

### What is Region 7's EJ Program?


EJ is an important part of Region 7's mission. An overall approach to identifying and addressing environmental justice concerns requires early involvement of the affected communities and other stakeholders. Region 7, the states, Indian tribes, and affected communities will work together to ensure fairer environmental and public health protection through effective use of policies and procedures.

### What is the EJ Small Grants Program?


The Environmental Justice Grants Program was created to provide financial assistance to community-based grassroots groups and other non-profit groups, as well as state and tribal governments. The EJ Small Grants Program, this year was given \$110,000 to fund superfund and non-superfund grant proposals. The grant funds can be used to develop new projects or improve the quality of existing environmental programs that have a direct impact on affected communities.


*"To the greatest extent practicable and permitted by law, and consistent with the principles set forth in the report on the National Performance Review, each Federal Agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low income populations..."*  
– Presidential Executive Order 12898


**Useful Environmental Justice publications  
available upon request:**

 EPA Journal: Environmental Protection - Has It Been Fair?


 Environmental Enforcement: A Citizen's Guide


 Environmental Equity: Reducing Risk for All Communities; Volume 1: Workgroup Report to the Administrator


 Environmental Equity: Reducing Risk for All Communities; Volume 2: Supporting Document

 Environmental Justice 1996 Annual Report: Working Toward Solutions

 Environmental Justice Community Handbook

 Environmental Justice Strategy: Executive Order 12898

 Executive Order 12898: Federal Registrar; Volume 59, Number 32

 Guide to Sustainable Community Indicators

 La Linea de Emergencia Para Justicia Ambiental

 Public's Role in Environmental Enforcement

 Serving a Diverse Society: EPA's Role in Environmental Justice

 Sirviendo A Una Sociedad Que Es Diversa: Funcion De EPA En Justicia Ambiental

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More examples of common Environmental Injustices:

- Asbestos and lead-based paint.
- Dumping of hazardous, industrial, or household waste in low-income or minority communities.
- Inadequate access to environmental information or educational material.
- Increased health problems due to poor air quality or air pollution: smog, increased particulate matter.
- Undue pesticide poisoning or exposure.