

WHAT IS AN EJ COMMUNITY?



The struggle to answer this question may have a limiting effect in the identification of integrated and coordinated community development and public health responses to environmental justice issues. There may also be competing interests within communities and among stakeholder organizations that can contribute to delays in responding to

communities' health and quality of life concerns relative to perceived risks to their health that may be the result of environmental factors.

Any one or several of the conditions described below can qualify a community as an "EJ" community. Care must be exercised however, because how a community internalizes and views these and related issues from its own cultural and experience lens may result in a community fitting this description defining itself using very different characteristics and in different ways.

Several studies have documented that communities of color and the poor may define their environmental stressors to be inclusive of violence or lack of transportation and the facets of economics, politics, and law enforcement and not exclusively air, land and water alone.

- ❖ One in which special populations make up a significant majority of the population or are disproportionately high relative to the national or state population percentage. (*In this instance "disproportionate means more than three times the national or state average"*)
- ❖ One in which the impacted population (*within 6 miles of a Superfund, brownfield or hazardous facility*) has a per-capita income of less than the national poverty level for more than a third of the community
- ❖ One in which the percentage of children with high blood lead level (+10mg/dl) exceeds 12% of population



- ❖ One in which a public health hazard related to chemical or radiological contamination of the environment has been identified
- ❖ One in which has been an emissions non-attainment area for more than 18 months
- ❖ One in which the children in the community attend a school (*public or private*) that is within three miles of a Superfund, brownfield, or hazardous facility
- ❖ One in which an operating coal fired power plant is within 30 miles
- ❖ One in which more that two administrative complaints have been filed
- ❖ One in which a local installation has exceeded TRI limits for two or more successive years

Socioeconomic factors and health disparities cut across many cultural and ethnic groupings and may also be used to determine whether a community can be characterized as an EJ community.

Is there evidence of multiple environmental hazards that may act cumulatively to have a negative impact on public health in the community?