

## Low-Income Residents and People of Color in Alaska Are Living Near Chemical Dangers

The Center for Effective Government graded states based on the dangers faced by people of color and residents with incomes below the poverty line living within one mile of dangerous facilities, compared to white and non-poor people in these areas. **Alaska scored a “B” but still has room for improvement.**

Nationally, 7.5 percent of the population lives within one mile of a hazardous facility.

### Key Findings

- Over 25,000 Alaskan residents (3.7 percent of the total population) live within one mile of a hazardous facility. These “fenceline communities” face potential chemical leaks and explosions on a daily basis.
- **Poor Asian and Pacific Islander children are twice as likely to live near chemical hazards as white children who are not in poverty.**
- Forty-three Alaskan public schools are located within one mile of a hazardous facility, putting 9,200 students in danger.

### Chemical dangers are real, and incidents are happening in Alaska.

In 2015, the EC Philips and Son fish processing plant in Ketchikan leaked around 39,000 pounds of anhydrous ammonia. The area surrounding the facility was evacuated, but no injuries were reported. **Anhydrous ammonia** is a toxic gas that can be fatal and can travel several miles from its source.

The Ketchikan plant uses anhydrous ammonia in its refrigeration system, although safer refrigerants (like carbon dioxide) can be used in its place. Twenty-nine other Alaskan facilities also store significant quantities of the toxic gas, most of them also seafood processing plants.

Alaska’s 40 high-risk facilities also include natural gas processing plants, gold mines, and chemical manufacturing facilities. Most are along the coast and away from the larger cities. However, cities like Anchorage do have chemical facilities, including water treatment plants that use **chlorine gas**. Like anhydrous ammonia, chlorine is highly toxic and a major release could endanger the lives of entire neighborhoods.

Each facility receives **shipments of chemicals**, which travel by rail or truck and put additional communities in danger of a catastrophic disaster.

### Are people of color and low-income residents of Alaska safe from chemical hazards?

Compared to most states, Alaska has a relatively small proportion of its total population living within one mile of a chemical facility (3.7 percent). The state has a small number of facilities relative to its size and few clusters in urban areas.



[Click here to open an interactive map of your neighborhood.](#)

Even so, people of color are more likely to live in fenceline communities than white residents. Children of color under 12, for example, are 1.4 times more likely. Living near hazardous facilities puts these children in danger of catastrophic disasters while also possibly exposing them to toxic emissions.

Unlike most states, poor residents in Alaska are not significantly more likely to live near chemical hazards than those above the poverty line. This suggests that Alaska lacks larger clusters of facilities around poor neighborhoods. However, children of color who are also in poverty do face increased likelihoods of danger. **Poor Asian and Pacific Islander children are twice as likely to live in fenceline communities as white children above the poverty line.** Poor Latino children are one and a half times more likely.

Additionally, 43 Alaska public schools are located within one mile of a hazardous facility, putting 9,200 students in danger.

### Inequities in Likelihood of Living in a Fenceline Community

Racial Inequities	Score	Grade	Income (Poverty) Inequities	Score	Grade
Percentage of People of Color Who Live in Fenceline	4.3%	B	Percentage of Poor People Who Live in Fenceline	3.2%	A
Likelihood of People of Color to Live in Fenceline (compared to whites)	1.3 times more likely	B	Likelihood of Poor People to Live in Fenceline (compared to those not in poverty)	1.2 times less likely	A
Percentage of Children of Color Under 12 Who Live in Fenceline	3.8%	A	Percentage of Poor Children Under 12 Who Live in Fenceline	3%	A
Likelihood of Children of Color Under 12 to Live in Fenceline (compared to white children under 12)	1.4 times more likely	B	Likelihood of Poor Children Under 12 to Live in Fenceline (compared to children under 12 not in poverty)	1.1 times less likely	A
Percentage of Children of Color Who Attend Public Schools in Fenceline	7.4%	B	Percentage of Children Receiving Free Lunch Who Attend Schools in Fenceline	7.1%	B
Likelihood of Children of Color to Attend Public Schools in Fenceline (compared to white children)	1.1 times more likely	B	Likelihood of Children Receiving Free Lunch to Attend Schools in Fenceline (compared to children not receiving free lunch)	Just as likely	B
Percentage of Elderly of Color Who Live in Fenceline	5.1%	B	Percentage of Elderly Poor People Who Live in Fenceline	2.2%	A
Likelihood of Elderly of Color to Live in Fenceline (compared to elderly whites)	1.6 times more likely	C	Likelihood of Elderly Poor People to Live in Fenceline (compared to elderly people not in poverty)	1.7 times less likely	A
<b>People of Color Grade</b>		<b>B</b>	<b>Poverty Grade</b>		<b>B</b>
<b>Overall Grade: B</b>					

### What you can do to protect your community from dangerous chemicals.

Alaskans like you can help. You can organize people in your community and educate others about these dangers. You can learn about your local zoning process (if your state gives local governments zoning authority) and whether it protects community members from nearby industrial plants that use hazardous chemicals – and share what you learn with your friends and neighbors. You can attend public meetings and planning hearings and urge decision makers to think carefully about the sites chosen for new industrial facilities, and you can write, call, and meet with other state, county, and city officials to send the message that *all* Alaskans deserve to be protected from chemical dangers.

You can also demand that the federal government require facilities to switch to safer chemicals and alternatives whenever feasible and urge the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation and the state-level OSHA to conduct more thorough and frequent inspections to spot problems before they cause disasters. And Alaskans can push local governments to require buffer zones around new and expanded chemical facilities to ensure homes and schools are not built nearby.

**Table 1: Percentage of Population Who Live in Fenceline Communities, by Age and Race**

	Black	Latino	American Indian/ Alaskan Native	Asian/Pacific Islander/ Native Hawaiian	White Not Hispanic	All Races
<b>All Ages</b>	<b>4.1%</b>	<b>5.2%</b>	<b>2.3%</b>	<b>7.5%</b>	<b>3.3%</b>	<b>3.7%</b>
0-17	3.3%	5.0%	2.0%	6.7%	2.9%	3.4%
18-64	4.3%	5.3%	2.5%	7.6%	3.5%	3.8%
65+	6.0%	4.9%	2.7%	10.4%	3.2%	3.7%
<b>Total # in fenceline</b>	<b>980</b>	<b>2,141</b>	<b>2,302</b>	<b>3,520</b>	<b>14,867</b>	<b>25,895</b>
<b>Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to whites</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>1.4 times less likely</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>---</b>	<b>---</b>

**Table 2: Percentage of Poor Population Who Live in Fenceline Communities, by Age and Race**

	Black	Latino	American Indian/ Alaskan Native	Asian/Pacific Islander/ Native Hawaiian	White Not Hispanic	All Races
<b>All Ages</b>	<b>3.0%</b>	<b>5.0%</b>	<b>1.8%</b>	<b>5.3%</b>	<b>3.1%</b>	<b>3.2%</b>
0-17	2.6%	4.3%	1.4%	5.8%	2.4%	2.8%
18-64	3.4%	5.9%	2.1%	5.1%	3.4%	3.5%
65+	0.1%	2.9%	0.5%	0.3%	3.0%	2.2%
<b>Total # in fenceline</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>383</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>941</b>	<b>2,211</b>
<b>Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to whites in poverty</b>	<b>Just as likely</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>1.7 times less likely</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>---</b>	<b>---</b>
<b>Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to same race not in poverty</b>	<b>1.4 times less likely</b>	<b>Just as likely</b>	<b>1.4 times less likely</b>	<b>1.5 times less likely</b>	<b>1.1 times less likely</b>	<b>1.2 times less likely</b>
<b>Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to whites not in poverty</b>	<b>1.1 times less likely</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>1.9 times less likely</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>1.1 times less likely</b>	<b>---</b>

**Table 3: Percentage of Children Who Attend Public School in Fenceline Communities, by Grade and Race**

	Black	Latino	American Indian/ Alaskan Native	Asian/Pacific Islander/ Native Hawaiian	White Not Hispanic	All Races
<b>All Grades</b>	<b>2.5%</b>	<b>6.7%</b>	<b>7.0%</b>	<b>12.6%</b>	<b>6.6%</b>	<b>7.0%</b>
Pre-K - 2	3.2%	6.6%	5.0%	11.7%	6.3%	6.3%
3-7	2.8%	6.5%	5.4%	12.5%	6.7%	6.7%
8-12	1.8%	7.0%	10.4%	13.3%	6.8%	7.9%
<b>Total # in fenceline</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>564</b>	<b>2,176</b>	<b>1,415</b>	<b>4,375</b>	<b>9,201</b>
<b>Likelihood of attending schools in fenceline, compared to white students</b>	<b>2.6 times less likely</b>	<b>Just as likely</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>---</b>	<b>---</b>

**Find the Full Report at [ForEffectiveGov.org](http://ForEffectiveGov.org)**