

Low-Income Residents and People of Color in Minnesota 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. **Minnesota scored poorly with a “D” grade.**

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

Key Findings

- More than 500,000 Minnesotans (one in 11) live within one mile of a facility storing large amounts of extremely hazardous chemicals. These “fenceline communities” face potential chemical leaks and explosions on a daily basis.
- **Black, Latino, and Asian/Pacific Islander children in Minnesota are nearly two times more likely to live near one of these facilities compared to white kids in the state.**
- **Poor black children are over two times more likely to live near facilities than white children not in poverty.**

Chemical dangers are real, and Minnesota has experienced recent industrial incidents.

Minnesota has witnessed several industrial incidents in recent years. In one example, a container at a 3M facility south of St. Paul leaked nitric acid in May 2015, exposing two workers and sending one to the hospital. The acid can cause severe chemical burns and poses an explosion hazard if inadvertently combined with other chemicals. In 2012, a fertilizer storage and distribution facility in a small town in the western part of the state released more than 11,000 pounds of toxic anhydrous ammonia, injuring two people.

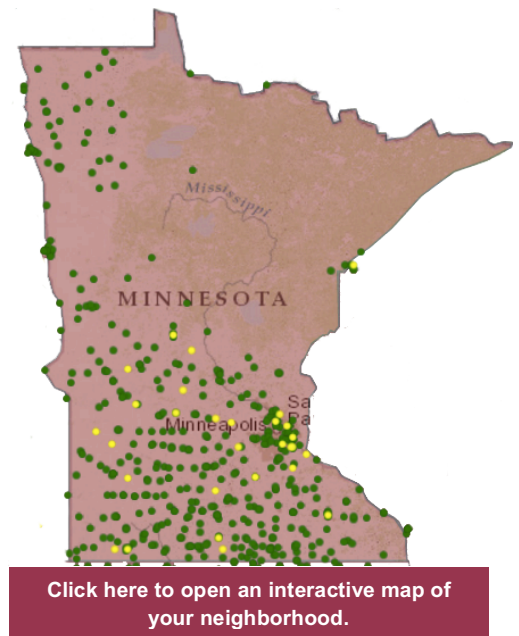
Minnesota’s 429 high-risk facilities are largely scattered across the southern and western parts of the state, with a significant number of plants concentrated near the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. They include everything from chemical manufacturing plants and food production facilities in cities and suburbs to rural water treatment and fertilizer distribution facilities.

These facilities use and store a variety of chemicals, including **anhydrous ammonia**, which is sold as a fertilizer and is also used in commercial refrigeration. Water treatment plants and other industrial facilities store **chlorine gas**, a deadly substance that can be used as a chemical weapon. A leak from one of these plants could sicken and kill surrounding neighbors before they have time to evacuate.

But the plants themselves aren't the only risk. **Companies ship these dangerous chemicals** to the facilities, often by train or by truck, and accidents in transit can also lead to fatal releases.

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

Almost 15 percent of blacks and over 14 percent of Latinos live near chemical and other industrial plants, compared to roughly nine percent of white residents. **Nearly 14 percent of kids of color under age 12 live near potentially**



dangerous facilities, compared to only about eight percent of white kids in this age group. These children face acute dangers and daily exposures to toxic chemicals that put them at a distinct disadvantage because young children are much more susceptible to chemical hazards than adults.

Poor children under age 12 also face unequal chemical dangers; for example, **poor black children are over two times more likely to live near a dangerous facility than white children who aren't poor.** Living in the shadow of an industrial facility increases stress on poor communities as they worry about the potential for a catastrophic disaster and daily exposures to toxic emissions. Living near these facilities can also decrease home values, meaning many poor families can't afford to move to safer neighborhoods if they want to do so.

Inequities in Likelihood of Living in a Fenceline Community

Racial Inequities			Income (Poverty) Inequities		
	Score	Grade		Score	Grade
Percentage of People of Color Who Live in Fenceline	13.6%	D	Percentage of Poor People Who Live in Fenceline	11.9%	D
Likelihood of People of Color to Live in Fenceline (compared to whites)	1.6 times more likely	C	Likelihood of Poor People to Live in Fenceline (compared to those not in poverty)	1.3 times more likely	C
Percentage of Children of Color Under 12 Who Live in Fenceline	13.5%	D	Percentage of Poor Children Under 12 Who Live in Fenceline	12.9%	D
Likelihood of Children of Color Under 12 to Live in Fenceline (compared to white children under 12)	1.7 times more likely	C	Likelihood of Poor Children Under 12 to Live in Fenceline (compared to children under 12 not in poverty)	1.4 times more likely	C
Percentage of Children of Color Who Attend Public Schools in Fenceline	15.9%	D	Percentage of Children Receiving Free Lunch Who Attend Schools in Fenceline	20.2%	F
Likelihood of Children of Color to Attend Public Schools in Fenceline (compared to white children)	Just as 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	12.3%	D	Percentage of Elderly Poor People Who Live in Fenceline	9.1%	D
Likelihood of Elderly of Color to Live in Fenceline (compared to elderly whites)	1.3 times more likely	B	Likelihood of Elderly Poor People to Live in Fenceline (compared to elderly people not in poverty)	Just as likely	A
People of Color Grade		D	Poverty Grade		D
Overall Grade: D					

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

Minnesotans 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** Minnesotans 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 Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and the state-level OSHA to conduct more thorough and frequent inspections to spot problems before they cause disasters. And Minnesotans 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
All Ages	14.8%	14.2%	6.4%	14.2%	8.8%	9.6%
0-17	15.0%	14.1%	6.3%	14.1%	7.9%	9.5%
18-64	14.9%	14.4%	6.7%	14.1%	9.0%	9.7%
65+	10.5%	14.0%	3.8%	16.4%	9.1%	9.3%
Total # in fenceline	39,661	35,699	3,504	31,254	378,313	501,154
Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to whites	1.7	1.6	1.4 times less likely	1.6	---	---

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
All Ages	15.6%	15.5%	4.8%	15.1%	10.2%	11.9%
0-17	16.0%	15.3%	4.1%	15.8%	9.8%	12.6%
18-64	15.8%	15.8%	5.4%	14.4%	10.7%	11.9%
65+	7.9%	16.2%	3.2%	16.8%	8.8%	9.1%
Total # in fenceline	15,008	9,698	962	5,797	36,734	71,021
Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to whites in poverty	1.5	1.5	2.1 times less likely	1.5	---	---
Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to same race not in poverty	1.1	1.1	1.5 times less likely	1.1	1.2	1.3
Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to whites not in poverty	1.8	1.8	1.8 times less likely	1.7	1.2	---

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
All Grades	16.2%	19.8%	7.7%	13.6%	16.0%	15.9%
Pre-K - 2	17.6%	22.0%	9.9%	13.3%	17.0%	17.1%
3-7	18.0%	18.8%	7.5%	14.0%	16.1%	16.1%
8-12	13.3%	19.2%	6.4%	13.3%	15.2%	15.0%
Total # in fenceline	12,848	12,841	1,127	7,307	97,223	134,741
Likelihood of attending schools in fenceline, compared to white students	Just as likely	1.2	2.1 times less likely	1.2 times less likely	---	---

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