

## Low-Income Residents and People of Color in Montana 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. **Montana scored in the middle with a “C” grade.**

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

### Key Findings

- Over 42,000 Montana residents (4.4 percent of the total population) 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.
- **Children of color under 12 are one-and-a-half times more likely to live near hazardous facilities than white children.**
- **Poor black children are 3.7 times more likely to live in fenceline communities than white children who are not in poverty.**

### Chemical dangers are real, and incidents are happening all across Montana

In 2014, the Praxair facility in Butte (which stores and produces chemicals) leaked over 1,000 pounds of hydrogen gas. Hydrogen gas is extremely flammable and could ignite into a fireball if the cloud encounters a spark. Thankfully, the incident did not result in any injuries or fatalities.

**Montana’s 41 high-risk facilities** encompass other chemical manufacturing plants, including those that produce and provide agricultural chemicals. Montana also has several facilities related to the oil and gas industry, including petroleum refineries and natural gas processing plants. These are located in both rural and urban areas.

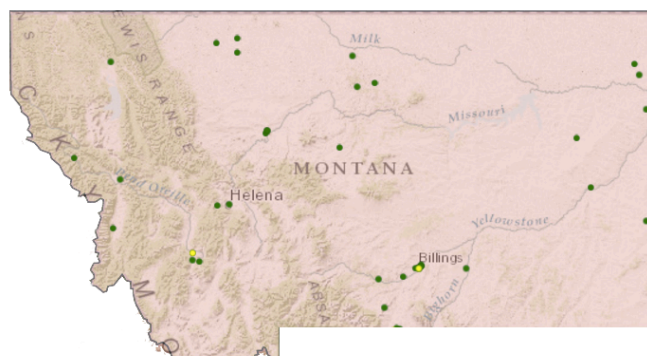
Municipal water treatment plants use **chlorine gas** for water purification. This deadly gas, if leaked, can also travel several miles from its source. Many residents are not aware that the facility that provides them with clean water may also store thousands of pounds of this dangerous chemical.

**Each facility receives or ships 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 Montana safe from chemical hazards?

Compared to neighboring Great Plains states, Montana has a relatively small number of facilities, and therefore, a smaller proportion of the total state population lives near them (4.3 percent compared to 12.8 percent in North Dakota). This might be due, in part, to a much smaller concentration of agrochemical facilities.

However, people of color are more likely to live in fenceline communities than white residents. Nearly seven percent of children of color under age 12 live in fenceline communities, compared to around four percent of white children – meaning they are one and a half times more likely to live near chemical dangers. **Latino and black children are at least two times more likely.**



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

Poor children also face a higher likelihood of danger. Poor children under age 12 are almost twice as likely to live in fenceline communities as non-poor children. **Being a poor child of color increases these likelihoods even more; poor black children, for example, are over three-and-a-half times more likely to live in these areas than non-poor white children.**

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	6%	B	Percentage of Poor People Who Live in Fenceline	5.6%	B
Likelihood of People of Color to Live in Fenceline (compared to whites)	1.5 times more likely	B	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	6.7%	B	Percentage of Poor Children Under 12 Who Live in Fenceline	7.3%	B
Likelihood of Children of Color Under 12 to Live in Fenceline (compared to white children under 12)	1.6 times more likely	B	Likelihood of Poor Children Under 12 to Live in Fenceline (compared to children under 12 not in poverty)	1.8 times more likely	D
Percentage of Children of Color Who Attend Public Schools in Fenceline	7.1%	B	Percentage of Children Receiving Free Lunch Who Attend Schools in Fenceline	8.4%	C
Likelihood of Children of Color to Attend Public Schools in Fenceline (compared to white children)	1.2 times less likely	A	Likelihood of Children Receiving Free Lunch to Attend Schools in Fenceline (compared to children not receiving free lunch)	1.2 times less likely	B
Percentage of Elderly of Color Who Live in Fenceline	4.2%	B	Percentage of Elderly Poor People Who Live in Fenceline	3.7%	B
Likelihood of Elderly of Color to Live in Fenceline (compared to elderly whites)	1.2 times more likely	B	Likelihood of Elderly Poor People to Live in Fenceline (compared to elderly people not in poverty)	Just as likely	B
<b>People of Color Grade</b>		<b>B</b>	<b>Poverty Grade</b>		<b>C</b>
<b>Overall Grade: C</b>					

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

Montana residents 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* Montana residents 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 Montana Department of Environmental Quality and federal OSHA to conduct more thorough and frequent inspections to spot problems before they cause disasters. And Montana residents 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>12.8%</b>	<b>9.1%</b>	<b>4.5%</b>	<b>3.0%</b>	<b>4.1%</b>	<b>4.4%</b>
0-17	7.9%	8.7%	4.6%	1.1%	4.0%	4.4%
18-64	15.6%	9.4%	4.6%	3.0%	4.4%	4.6%
65+	4.4%	8.8%	2.1%	6.5%	3.5%	3.5%
<b>Total # in fenceline</b>	<b>473</b>	<b>2,661</b>	<b>2,750</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>35,278</b>	<b>42,502</b>
Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to whites	3.1	2.2	1.1	1.4 times less likely	---	---

**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>14.8%</b>	<b>8.6%</b>	<b>6.3%</b>	<b>4.7%</b>	<b>5.0%</b>	<b>5.6%</b>
0-17	11.9%	8.9%	6.7%	5.1%	5.0%	6.2%
18-64	17.3%	7.8%	6.0%	3.3%	5.2%	5.5%
65+	0.0%	16.9%	5.4%	24.8%	3.1%	3.7%
<b>Total # in fenceline</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>680</b>	<b>1,445</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>5,541</b>	<b>8,276</b>
Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to whites in poverty	3.0	1.7	1.3	1.1	---	---
Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to same race not in poverty	1.2	1.1 times less likely	1.9	1.8	1.2	1.3
Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to whites not in poverty	3.7	2.1	1.6	1.2	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
<b>All Grades</b>	<b>12.2%</b>	<b>11.5%</b>	<b>4.7%</b>	<b>8.7%</b>	<b>8.3%</b>	<b>8.1%</b>
Pre-K - 2	6.7%	10.1%	3.4%	6.1%	6.4%	6.3%
3-7	10.8%	10.4%	4.6%	6.1%	7.1%	7.0%
8-12	17.4%	14.1%	6.1%	12.5%	10.7%	10.5%
<b>Total # in fenceline</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>651</b>	<b>768</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>9,592</b>	<b>11,579</b>
Likelihood of attending schools in fenceline, compared to white students	1.5	1.4	1.8 times less likely	1 times less likely	---	---

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