

Low-Income Residents and People of Color in New Jersey Are Living Near Chemical Dangers

The Center for Effective Government graded states based on the dangers faced by people of color and low-income residents living within one mile of dangerous facilities, compared to white and non-poor people in these areas. **New Jersey scored a “C” grade.**

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

Key Findings

- More than 350,000 New Jerseyans (four 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 age 12 are one-and-a-half times more likely to live in the shadow of a hazardous chemical facility compared to white children.**
- **Poor black children are over two-and-a-half times more likely to live near facilities than white children not in poverty.**

Chemical dangers are real, and several recent incidents have occurred in New Jersey.

New Jersey has seen several recent industrial incidents involving toxic, flammable, and explosive chemicals. In January 2013, the Cardolite Corporation manufacturing plant in Newark spilled ethylenediamine, a highly toxic organic compound that irritates the skin, eyes, and lungs and can cause death if even relatively small amounts are inhaled. One worker was injured.

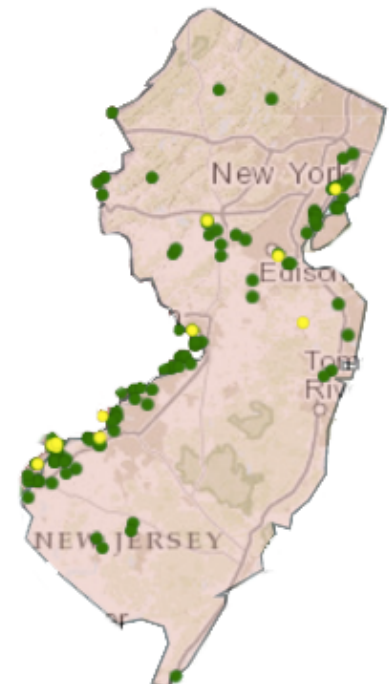
New Jersey's 78 high-risk facilities are dotted across the state but are largely concentrated near Trenton and Newark. They include everything from chemical manufacturing facilities, to food production plants, to oil and gas distribution facilities.

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. 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 New Jersey safe from chemical hazards?

Roughly five percent of kids of color under age 12 live near potentially dangerous facilities, compared to 3.5 percent of white kids. 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.



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

Poor children under age 12 also face unequal chemical dangers in New Jersey; seven percent of them live in a fenceline community, compared to fewer than four percent of non-poor kids. **Poor black children fare even worse, being over two-and-a-half 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	Score	Grade	Income (Poverty) Inequities	Score	Grade
Percentage of People of Color Who Live in Fenceline	4.9%	B	Percentage of Poor People Who Live in Fenceline	5.9%	B
Likelihood of People of Color to Live in Fenceline (compared to whites)	1.4 times more likely	B	Likelihood of Poor People to Live in Fenceline (compared to those not in poverty)	1.5 times more likely	D
Percentage of Children of Color Under 12 Who Live in Fenceline	5.1%	B	Percentage of Poor Children Under 12 Who Live in Fenceline	7%	B
Likelihood of Children of Color Under 12 to Live in Fenceline (compared to white children under 12)	1.5 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	4.3%	A	Percentage of Children Receiving Free Lunch Who Attend Schools in Fenceline	4.8%	A
Likelihood of Children of Color to Attend Public Schools in Fenceline (compared to white children)	1.3 times more likely	C	Likelihood of Children Receiving Free Lunch to Attend Schools in Fenceline (compared to children not receiving free lunch)	1.2 times more likely	C
Percentage of Elderly of Color Who Live in Fenceline	4.7%	B	Percentage of Elderly Poor People Who Live in Fenceline	4.6%	B
Likelihood of Elderly of Color to Live in Fenceline (compared to elderly whites)	1.5 times more likely	C	Likelihood of Elderly Poor People to Live in Fenceline (compared to elderly people not in poverty)	1.3 times more likely	C
People of Color Grade		C	Poverty Grade		C
Overall Grade: C					

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

New Jerseyans 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** New Jerseyans 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 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and federal OSHA to conduct more thorough and frequent inspections to spot problems before they cause disasters. And New Jerseyans 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	5.3%	4.6%	6.2%	5.0%	3.4%	4.1%
0-17	5.8%	4.7%	5.7%	4.6%	3.3%	4.1%
18-64	5.1%	4.6%	6.7%	5.2%	3.5%	4.1%
65+	5.3%	4.1%	4.6%	4.5%	3.2%	3.6%
Total # in fenceline	61,094	72,526	1,251	37,512	174,737	350,232
Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to whites	1.5	1.3	1.8	1.5	---	---

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	7.5%	5.2%	5.4%	6.2%	5.3%	5.9%
0-17	8.3%	5.7%	3.8%	5.2%	6.1%	6.6%
18-64	7.1%	5.0%	6.8%	6.8%	5.4%	5.7%
65+	6.9%	4.2%	4.6%	5.0%	3.8%	4.6%
Total # in fenceline	17,274	16,350	225	3,222	16,001	53,095
Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to whites in poverty	1.4	Just as likely	Just as likely	1.2	---	---
Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to same race not in poverty	1.6	1.2	1.2 times less likely	1.3	1.6	1.5
Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to whites not in poverty	2.3	1.6	1.6	1.9	1.6	---

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	4.9%	4.1%	4.9%	4.1%	3.5%	3.9%
Pre-K - 2	5.2%	3.9%	3.2%	4.2%	2.9%	3.7%
3-7	4.6%	3.9%	5.7%	3.8%	2.8%	3.4%
8-12	5.1%	4.6%	5.4%	4.3%	4.3%	4.5%
Total # in fenceline	10,770	13,260	86	5,268	23,550	53,289
Likelihood of attending schools in fenceline, compared to white students	1.4	1.2	1.4	1.2	---	---

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