

Low-Income Residents and People of Color in Utah 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. **Utah 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

- More than 183,000 Utah residents (6.6 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 fenceline communities than white children.**
- **Poor black, Latino, and Asian/Pacific Islander children are twice as likely to live near hazardous facilities as white children who aren't in poverty.**

Chemical dangers are real, and incidents are happening in Utah.

In 2012, a fertilizer manufacturer leaked nearly 1,000 pounds of anhydrous ammonia gas. This gas is highly toxic, can be fatal if inhaled, and can travel several miles from its source. A major release could put an entire neighborhood in danger.

Utah's 94 high-risk facilities include additional fertilizer and chemical manufacturers, along with food processing plants that use **anhydrous ammonia** as refrigerants. Utah also has petroleum refineries and natural gas processing plants that are linked to fossil fuel extraction. They store highly combustible chemical mixtures capable of causing significant damage.

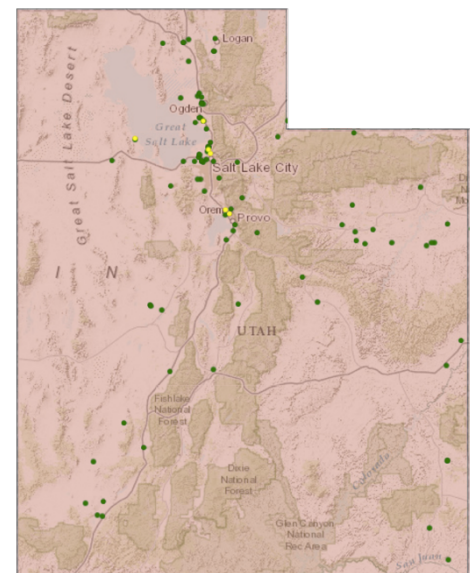
Most facilities are concentrated near Salt Lake City and Ogden. In cities, you also find municipal water treatment plants that use **chlorine gas** for water purification. Chlorine is another toxic gas that was used as a chemical weapon in World War I. Many residents are not aware that the facility that provides them with clean water may also store thousands of pounds of this deadly 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 Utah safe from chemical hazards?

Nine percent of children of color under age 12 live in fenceline communities, compared to six percent of white children — **meaning they are 1.5 times more likely to live near a hazardous facility than white children.** Elderly people of color are 1.8 times more likely to live in fenceline communities compared to elderly white residents. Young children and the elderly are both more susceptible to chemical hazards than healthy adults, and they may have a more difficult time evacuating quickly in the event of a chemical catastrophe.

Poor children under age 12, especially poor children of color, are also significantly more likely to live in fenceline communities. For example, **black, Latino, and Asian and Pacific Islander children are all twice as likely to live near**



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chemical hazards as white children who live above the poverty line. 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.

Many children do not escape these dangers at school. Seventy Utah public schools are located within one mile of a hazardous chemical facility, putting more than 40,000 students in danger.

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	9.2%	C	Percentage of Poor People Who Live in Fenceline	8.4%	C
Likelihood of People of Color to Live in Fenceline (compared to whites)	1.5 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	9%	C	Percentage of Poor Children Under 12 Who Live in Fenceline	9.1%	C
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)	1.4 times more likely	C
Percentage of Children of Color Who Attend Public Schools in Fenceline	8.5%	C	Percentage of Children Receiving Free Lunch Who Attend Schools in Fenceline	7.2%	B
Likelihood of Children of Color to Attend Public Schools in Fenceline (compared to white children)	1.4 times more likely	C	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	9.4%	C	Percentage of Elderly Poor People Who Live in Fenceline	7.4%	C
Likelihood of Elderly of Color to Live in Fenceline (compared to elderly whites)	1.8 times more likely	D	Likelihood of Elderly Poor People to Live in Fenceline (compared to elderly people not in poverty)	1.4 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.

Utah 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** Utah 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 Utah Department of Environmental Quality and the state-level OSHA to conduct more thorough and frequent inspections to spot problems before they cause disasters. And Utah 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
All Ages	10.9%	9.6%	6.7%	8.8%	6%	6.7%
0-17	9.5%	9.6%	6.1%	8.5%	5.8%	6.6%
18-64	11.6%	9.5%	7.1%	8.8%	6.3%	6.9%
65+	13.6%	10.1%	5.9%	9.1%	5.1%	5.4%
Total # in fenceline	3,211	34,518	2,046	7,238	133,843	183,916
Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to whites	1.8	1.6	1.1	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	12.3%	11.3%	5.6%	10.8%	7.0%	8.4%
0-17	11.4%	11.4%	4.8%	12.7%	6.7%	8.7%
18-64	13.9%	11.2%	6.3%	9.6%	7.1%	8.3%
65+	0.0%	12.7%	2.7%	13.9%	6.5%	7.4%
Total # in fenceline	1,047	10,568	539	1,910	14,933	29,437
Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to whites in poverty	1.8	1.6	1.3 times less likely	1.6	---	---
Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to same race not in poverty	1.2	1.3	1.3 times less likely	1.3	1.2	1.3
Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to whites not in poverty	2.1	1.9	1.1 times less likely	1.8	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	9.7%	9.1%	4.4%	8.2%	6.2%	6.7%
Pre-K - 2	11.3%	10.5%	4.5%	9.6%	6.7%	7.4%
3-7	11.6%	10.3%	5.3%	10.2%	6.8%	7.5%
8-12	6.3%	6.5%	3.4%	5.3%	5.1%	5.3%
Total # in fenceline	770	8,725	323	1,628	29,094	41,155
Likelihood of attending schools in fenceline, compared to white students	1.6	1.5	1.4 times less likely	1.3	---	---

Find the Full Report at ForEffectiveGov.org