

The Negative Impacts of Air Pollution on Latino Communities



Since 1970, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has protected public health by setting and enforcing standards to protect the quality of the air we breathe and the water we drink. Currently, however, some members of Congress

are seeking to stop the EPA from protecting public health, by rolling back existing laws like the Clean Air Act and blocking needed clean air protections. Research shows that Latino communities are often hit hardest by the health impacts of dirty air.

CONGRESS MUST ACT TO PROTECT OUR COMMUNITIES

The EPA must be allowed to protect our health and our families by improving standards to address mercury, arsenic, carbon dioxide and other life-threatening pollution in our air. Updating these rules will prevent tens of thousands of deaths each year from respiratory diseases, heart attacks and other illnesses. Congress should stand up for our clean air and the health of our families, not the profits of big corporate polluters.

Air Pollution Greatly Affects Latinos

Across the country, millions of Americans suffer the health burdens of air pollution, from asthma to lung cancer to chronic bronchitis. Latinos find themselves among some of the most impacted communities, suffering greatly under the costs of health care, lost days of school, missed work days, and ultimately, lives lost due to the life-threatening contaminants in our air.

Latinos often live in the geographic areas with the highest concentrations of air pollution and suffer the impacts intensely. According to recent reports from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Lung Association:

- In 2006, 26.6 percent of Hispanics lived in counties that violated 24-hour standards for fine particulate matter (PM2.5)—the greatest percentage of any ethnic group.¹
- That same year, 48.4 percent of Hispanics lived in counties that frequently violated eight-hour ground-level ozone standards.²
- As of 2008, 4.7 million Hispanics had been diagnosed with asthma in their lifetime.³

- Hispanic children are 60 percent more likely to have asthma, as compared to non-Hispanic whites.⁴
- Approximately two of every five Hispanics were classified as uninsured during 2008, compared to 14.1 percent for non-Hispanic whites and 16 percent for Asians/Pacific Islanders.⁵

Scientists have known for decades that particulate matter and ozone, along with other air pollutants, are associated with acute and chronic health problems, including premature death, lung cancer, exacerbation of respiratory and cardiovascular disease, lung inflammation, asthma, bronchitis, and increased risk for cardiovascular death. For communities that live in areas where air pollution is a problem, these impacts will have far reaching impacts on their lives and livelihoods.

¹ Center for Disease Control and Prevention, "CDC Health Disparities and Inequalities report – United States, 2011," January 2011.

² CDC 2011.

³ American Lung Association, "Trends in Asthma Morbidity and Mortality," February 2010.

⁴ U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Office of Minority Health, "Asthma and Hispanic Americans," <http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/templates/content.aspx?ID=6173>.

⁵ CDC 2011.

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