

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

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

Key Findings

- Over 230,000 Kansas residents (one in 12) 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.
- **Young children of color and those living in poverty are 1.7 times more likely to live in fenceline communities**, compared to white children and those above the poverty line, respectively.
- The greatest disparities are seen among **poor Latino children, who are nearly three times more likely to live near hazardous facilities** than white children who are not poor.

Chemical dangers are real, and incidents are happening across Kansas.

In 2014 alone, Coffeyville Resources Nitrogen Fertilizers in Coffeyville had **over 40 reported releases of anhydrous ammonia**, totaling at least 1,100 pounds. Anhydrous ammonia is a toxic gas that can travel several miles from its source. A large release could injure or even kill surrounding residents. The facility is less than a mile from an early childhood learning center.

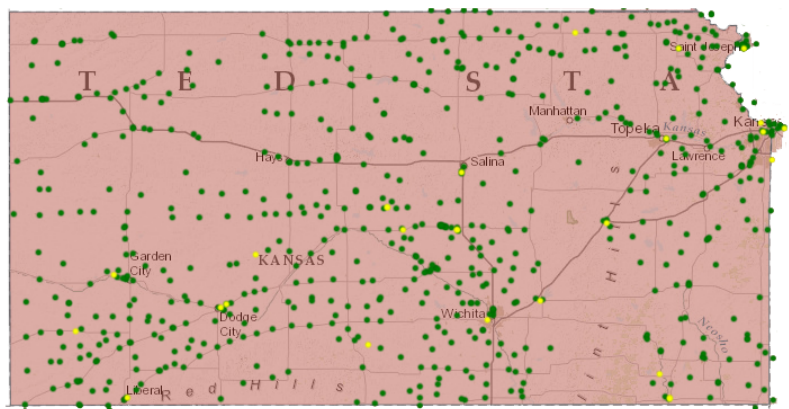
Kansas is dotted with similar fertilizer facilities that distribute anhydrous ammonia fertilizer to farmers. Other facilities using this deadly gas include cold storage warehouses and food manufacturing plants, which use the chemical in their refrigeration systems.

Another danger comes from water treatment facilities that use **chlorine gas** for purification. Many are located in major cities and sometimes within residential areas. Chlorine gas is highly toxic and can travel quickly from its source – properties that made it a deadly chemical weapon during World War I.

Kansas’s 665 high-risk facilities together store up to eleven and a half billion pounds of highly toxic and flammable chemicals. These facilities receive shipments of these substances, which travel by rail or truck, putting additional communities in danger of a catastrophic disaster.

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

Thirteen percent of children of color under 12 live in fenceline communities, compared to seven and a half percent of white children. This makes children of color 1.7 times more likely to live near facilities than white children. **Latino children are over twice as likely as white children to live in fenceline communities.**



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

Many of these children also attend schools within one mile of a dangerous facility. Kansas ranks fifth for the percentage of public school children of color (18.5 percent) who attend schools near facilities. Living and studying near hazardous facilities puts these children in danger of a chemical disaster while possibly exposing them to daily toxic emissions.

Poor children are also more likely to face chemical risks. Kansas ranks fourth for the percentage of students receiving free lunch (23.2 percent) who attend schools near chemical facilities. And poor children under 12 are 1.7 times more likely to live in fenceline communities than children above the poverty line.

Being poor and a child of color, however, increases this likelihood even more. **Poor Latino children in Kansas are more than two and a half times more likely to live near dangerous facilities than white children who are above the poverty line.**

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	12.5%	D	Percentage of Poor People Who Live in Fenceline	12.3%	D
Likelihood of People of Color to Live in Fenceline (compared to whites)	1.7 times more likely	C	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	13%	D	Percentage of Poor Children Under 12 Who Live in Fenceline	13.9%	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)	1.7 times more likely	D
Percentage of Children of Color Who Attend Public Schools in Fenceline	18.5%	F	Percentage of Children Receiving Free Lunch Who Attend Schools in Fenceline	23.2%	F
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)	1.1 times more likely	C
Percentage of Elderly of Color Who Live in Fenceline	11.4%	D	Percentage of Elderly Poor People Who Live in Fenceline	9.9%	D
Likelihood of Elderly of Color to Live in Fenceline (compared to elderly whites)	1.6 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		D	Poverty Grade		D
Overall Grade: D					

What you do to protect your community from dangerous chemicals.

Kansas 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** Kansas 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 Kansas Department of Health & Environment and the federal OSHA to conduct more thorough and frequent inspections to spot problems before they cause disasters. And Kansas 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	10.7%	15.9%	8.4%	6.9%	7.5%	8.6%
0-17	10.6%	15.7%	8.0%	6.9%	7.3%	9.0%
18-64	10.6%	16.0%	8.5%	7.0%	7.6%	8.6%
65+	12.1%	14.8%	9.1%	6.2%	7.3%	7.6%
Total # in fenceline	16,517	47,671	1,873	4,790	162,522	238,973
Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to whites	1.4	2.1	1.1	1.1 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
All Ages	14.2%	19.0%	9.1%	5.9%	10.1%	12.3%
0-17	13.6%	18.8%	9.7%	9.2%	10.6%	13.4%
18-64	14.7%	19.4%	8.7%	4.8%	10.1%	11.9%
65+	13.3%	17.5%	9.9%	5.2%	9.2%	9.9%
Total # in fenceline	5,844	15,013	488	595	23,434	46,994
Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to whites in poverty	1.4	1.9	1.1 times less likely	1.7	---	---
Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to same race not in poverty	1.5	1.3	1.1	1.2 times less likely	1.4	1.5
Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to whites not in poverty	2.0	2.7	1.3	1.2 times less likely	1.4	---

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	10.7%	24.2%	17.4%	8.7%	21.7%	20.6%
PreK - 2	14.9%	30.6%	21.7%	11.6%	25.3%	24.9%
3-7	10.6%	23.5%	17.4%	9.2%	21.6%	20.4%
8-12	7.1%	17.8%	13.3%	5.5%	19.0%	17.2%
Total # in fenceline	3,655	20,291	865	1,122	68,407	97,627
Likelihood of attending schools in fenceline, compared to white students	2 times less likely	1.1	1.2 times less likely	2.5 times less likely	---	---

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