

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

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

### Key Findings

- More than 56,000 Mainers (4.4 percent) 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 more than twice as likely to live to live in the shadow of a hazardous chemical facility compared to white kids in Maine.**
- **Poor black children are almost seven times more likely to live near facilities than white children not in poverty.**

### Chemical dangers are real, and potentially dangerous facilities are scattered across Maine.

**Maine’s 38 high-risk facilities are dotted across the state, with most plants located near Portland and Lewiston.** They include everything from electronics manufacturing plants and food production facilities in cities and suburbs to rural pulp and paper mills. Oil and gas distribution facilities are also common in the state.

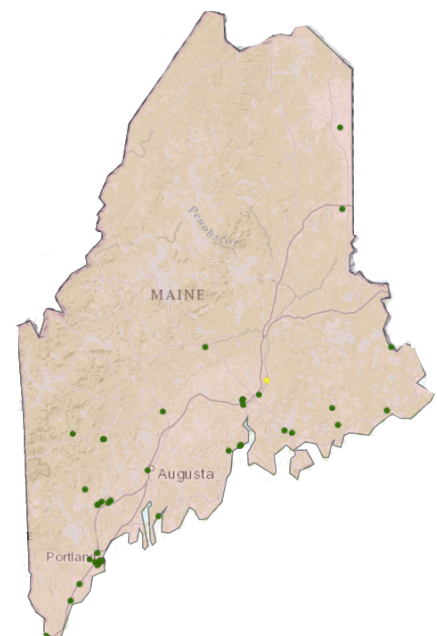
These facilities use and store a variety of chemicals, including **anhydrous ammonia**, which is used in commercial refrigeration. Pulp and paper mills commonly use a variety of chlorine compounds, including toxic **chlorine dioxide**, which can irritate the nose, throat, and lungs.

One facility in the state has suffered a series of incidents that have injured several workers since 2010. The Old Town Fuel and Fiber Mill, located northeast of Bangor, makes wood pulp and has experienced several chemical leaks involving chlorine dioxide.

But the plants themselves aren't the only risk. **Companies ship 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 Maine safe from chemical hazards?

More than 15 percent of black residents live in fenceline communities, compared to only four percent of white residents – meaning blacks are nearly four times more likely to live near chemical hazards than whites. **More than nine percent of kids of color under age 12 live near potentially dangerous facilities, compared to fewer than four percent of white kids in this age group.** Additionally, children of color are almost three times more likely to attend public schools close to



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

a risky industrial facility compared to white students 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.

Poor children under age 12 also face unequal chemical dangers; more than six percent live in a fenceline community, compared to fewer than four percent of non-poor children. **Poor black children fare even worse, being almost seven 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	8.8%	C	Percentage of Poor People Who Live in Fenceline	6.1%	B
Likelihood of People of Color to Live in Fenceline (compared to whites)	2.1 times more likely	F	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	9.1%	C	Percentage of Poor Children Under 12 Who Live in Fenceline	6.3%	B
Likelihood of Children of Color Under 12 to Live in Fenceline (compared to white children under 12)	2.4 times more likely	F	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	13.6%	D	Percentage of Children Receiving Free Lunch Who Attend Schools in Fenceline	7.4%	B
Likelihood of Children of Color to Attend Public Schools in Fenceline (compared to white children)	2.8 times more likely	F	Likelihood of Children Receiving Free Lunch to Attend Schools in Fenceline (compared to children not receiving free lunch)	1.3 times more likely	C
Percentage of Elderly of Color Who Live in Fenceline	6.3%	B	Percentage of Elderly Poor People Who Live in Fenceline	4.9%	B
Likelihood of Elderly of Color to Live in Fenceline (compared to elderly whites)	1.7 times more likely	C	Likelihood of Elderly Poor People to Live in Fenceline (compared to elderly people not in poverty)	1.4 times more likely	C
<b>People of Color Grade</b>		<b>D</b>	<b>Poverty Grade</b>		<b>C</b>
<b>Overall Grade: D</b>					

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

Mainers 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* Mainers 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 Maine Department of Environmental Protection and federal OSHA to conduct more thorough and frequent inspections to spot problems before they cause disasters. And Mainers 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>15.5%</b>	<b>7.6%</b>	<b>1.8%</b>	<b>12.5%</b>	<b>4.1%</b>	<b>4.4%</b>
0-17	16.6%	7.4%	1.1%	12.1%	3.5%	4.0%
18-64	15.7%	8.0%	2.0%	12.6%	4.4%	4.7%
65+	2.8%	5.1%	1.5%	13.6%	3.6%	3.7%
<b>Total # in fenceline</b>	<b>2,107</b>	<b>1,290</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>1,767</b>	<b>50,190</b>	<b>56,506</b>
<b>Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to whites</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>2.3 times less likely</b>	<b>3.1</b>	---	---

**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>23.3%</b>	<b>11.7%</b>	<b>1.2%</b>	<b>16.7%</b>	<b>5.2%</b>	<b>6.1%</b>
0-17	22.5%	11.6%	2.0%	15.6%	4.6%	6.0%
18-64	24.7%	11.2%	0.9%	18.1%	5.6%	6.4%
65+	3.6%	16.7%	1.2%	8.8%	4.7%	4.9%
<b>Total # in fenceline</b>	<b>1,471</b>	<b>589</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>8,098</b>	<b>10,722</b>
<b>Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to whites in poverty</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>4.3 times less likely</b>	<b>3.2</b>	---	---
<b>Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to same race not in poverty</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>1.7 times less likely</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>1.5</b>
<b>Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to whites not in poverty</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>3.2 times less likely</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>1.3</b>	---

**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>19.0%</b>	<b>11.1%</b>	<b>3.4%</b>	<b>12.5%</b>	<b>4.8%</b>	<b>5.6%</b>
PreK - 2	16.9%	11.3%	3.4%	14.8%	4.9%	5.6%
3-7	19.3%	11.1%	1.7%	10.0%	4.2%	4.9%
8-12	20.2%	10.9%	5.0%	13.6%	5.5%	6.2%
<b>Total # in fenceline</b>	<b>1,051</b>	<b>344</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>371</b>	<b>7,954</b>	<b>10,019</b>
<b>Likelihood of attending schools in fenceline, compared to white students</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>1.4 times less likely</b>	<b>2.6</b>	---	---

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