

## Low-Income Residents and People of Color in Wyoming 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. **Wyoming scored a “B” but still has room for improvement.**

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

### Key Findings

- Nearly 17,000 Wyoming residents (3.1 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.
- **Black residents are twice as likely to live in fenceline communities as whites.**
- **Elderly people of color are one-and-a-half times more likely to live near hazardous facilities than white elderly residents.**

### Chemical dangers are real, and incidents are happening in Wyoming.

In 2013, the Frontier refinery in Cheyenne leaked 6,000 pounds of a flammable mixture that included propane and butane, among other volatile gases. The release caused a fire and explosion. Fortunately, no one was injured.

**Wyoming’s 61 high-risk facilities** include other petroleum refineries as well as natural gas extraction facilities and fertilizer manufacturers and distributors. The majority are in rural areas.

However, cities have their own risks, including water treatment facilities that use **chlorine gas** for water purification. This deadly gas, if leaked, can also travel several miles from its source. Many residents are not aware that the facility that provides them with clean water may also store thousands of pounds of this dangerous chemical.

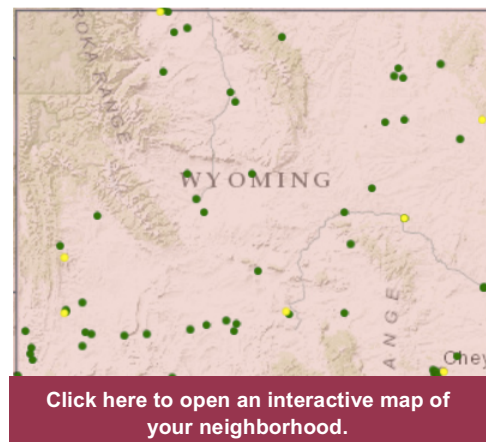
**Each facility receives or ships chemicals**, which travel by rail or truck and put additional communities in danger of a catastrophic disaster.

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

Compared to most states, Wyoming has a relatively small proportion of its total population living within one mile of a chemical facility (3.1 percent). Additionally, young children of color as a group are not significantly more likely to live in fenceline communities than white children (3.6 percent compared to 3.4 percent). This results in Wyoming earning a “B” on the people of color grade.

However, when you look at individual race categories, you see some glaring disparities. Black and Latino children are more likely to live in fenceline communities than white children. However, American Indian children (Wyoming’s second largest racial group) are over two times *less* likely to be in danger than white children, possible due to the absence of dangerous facilities on the state’s reservation. Asian and Pacific Islander children are also less likely to live near facilities than white children.

Poor children under age 12 are 1.3 times more likely to live in fenceline communities than non-poor children, and poor elderly populations are 1.6 times more likely than non-poor elderly to live in these areas. These factors contributed to



Wyoming's C on the poverty grade. 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.

Overall, Wyoming is doing better than most states. This may be due in part to not having large concentrations of facilities in cities. However, many rural communities face chemical dangers, especially as fracking increases the need for more oil and gas processing plants.

### 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	3.6%	A	Percentage of Poor People Who Live in Fenceline	3.6%	A
Likelihood of People of Color to Live in Fenceline (compared to whites)	1.2 times more likely	B	Likelihood of Poor People to Live in Fenceline (compared to those not in poverty)	1.2 times more likely	B
Percentage of Children of Color Under 12 Who Live in Fenceline	3.6%	A	Percentage of Poor Children Under 12 Who Live in Fenceline	4.1%	A
Likelihood of Children of Color Under 12 to Live in Fenceline (compared to white children under 12)	1.1 times more likely	A	Likelihood of Poor Children Under 12 to Live in Fenceline (compared to children under 12 not in poverty)	1.3 times more likely	B
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	5.6%	B
Likelihood of Children of Color to Attend Public Schools in Fenceline (compared to white children)	Just as likely	B	Likelihood of Children Receiving Free Lunch to Attend Schools in Fenceline (compared to children not receiving free lunch)	1.4 times more likely	D
Percentage of Elderly of Color Who Live in Fenceline	4%	B	Percentage of Elderly Poor People Who Live in Fenceline	4.3%	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)	1.6 times more likely	D
<b>People of Color Grade</b>		<b>B</b>	<b>Poverty Grade</b>		<b>C</b>
<b>Overall Grade: B</b>					

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

Wyoming 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* Wyoming 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 Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality and the state-level OSHA to conduct more thorough and frequent inspections to spot problems before they cause disasters. And Wyoming 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
<b>All Ages</b>	<b>5.9%</b>	<b>4.2%</b>	<b>1.9%</b>	<b>2.2%</b>	<b>3.0%</b>	<b>3.1%</b>
0-17	4.7%	4.0%	1.3%	1.9%	3.0%	3.1%
18-64	5.9%	4.2%	2.4%	2.4%	3.0%	3.1%
65+	10.1%	5.2%	0.6%	1.0%	2.8%	2.9%
<b>Total # in fenceline</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>2,135</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>14,044</b>	<b>16,995</b>
Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to whites	2.0	1.4	1.5 times less likely	1.3 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
<b>All Ages</b>	<b>1.6%</b>	<b>3.9%</b>	<b>3.7%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>3.7%</b>	<b>3.6%</b>
0-17	1.4%	3.1%	1.1%	0.2%	4.0%	3.5%
18-64	0.6%	4.6%	5.7%	0.1%	3.6%	3.6%
65+	41.2%	7.1%	0.4%	0.0%	4.1%	4.3%
<b>Total # in fenceline</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1,755</b>	<b>2,317</b>
Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to whites in poverty	2.3 times less likely	Just as likely	Just as likely	37.1	---	---
Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to same race not in poverty	4.4 times less likely	1.1 times less likely	3.0	26.5 times less likely	1.3	1.2
Likelihood of living in fenceline, compared to whites not in poverty	1.8 times less likely	1.4	1.3	28.5 times less likely	1.3	---

**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>2.7%</b>	<b>5.1%</b>	<b>1.7%</b>	<b>2.3%</b>	<b>4.3%</b>	<b>4.3%</b>
Pre-K - 2	2.4%	5.7%	1.0%	2.9%	5.0%	4.9%
3-7	5.0%	6.8%	1.7%	4.5%	4.9%	5.1%
8-12	0.5%	2.6%	2.5%	0.0%	3.3%	3.2%
<b>Total # in fenceline</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>598</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>3,183</b>	<b>3,965</b>
Likelihood of attending schools in fenceline, compared to white students	1.6 times less likely	1.2	2.5 times less likely	1.9 times less likely	---	---

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