



ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC – safer, healthier people.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, and CDC's National Center for Environmental Health believe that everyone deserves clean air and water and a healthy place to live, work, learn, and play. But we have not yet achieved that in all parts of our country. Consider these real case examples:

- A company recruits undocumented workers to remove asbestos from old buildings without proper protection.
- A polyvinyl chloride plant opens in a small, mostly African-American community already home to 10 chemical plants that also produce toxic waste.

These are examples of environmental justice issues. Environmental justice means that all people, regardless of race, color, national origin, or income are treated fairly and involved in a meaningful way in the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

Fair treatment means that no group of people, including a racial, ethnic, or a socioeconomic group, should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences that result from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or from the implementation of government programs and policies.

Responding to environmental justice concerns protects everyone. The air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat, the ground below us, the communities in which we live, the chemicals we encounter—all are part of our environment, and all can affect our health.

Both CDC and ATSDR work actively in the area of environmental justice. ATSDR, for example, documents and corrects disparities in exposure to hazardous materials to prevent harm to human health and diminished quality of life.

To do this, ATSDR works with communities, environmental groups, tribal governments, and local, state, and other federal agencies, including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, to identify communities where people might be exposed to hazardous substances.

The Department of Justice Asbestos Restitution Project is one example. From 1997 to 2000, a company recruited and employed undocumented workers from Mexico to work in construction and demolition at several asbestos removal sites in three U.S. cities. ATSDR developed a health education program for the former workers. ATSDR worked with local, state, and other federal agencies to find avenues to let former workers and their household contacts know about their possible exposure to asbestos and to give

them information that could help them with their health. ATSDR also gave information to local healthcare providers so they could better respond to worker inquiries.

CDC's National Center for Environmental Health publishes The National Report on the Human Exposure to Environmental Chemicals. This report shows whether levels of exposure to chemicals are higher among minorities and other at-risk groups than in the general population. These findings can help guide the development of programs and policies to better protect health.

CDC also has an Office of Urban Affairs and an Office of Minority Health. These groups work directly to educate members of these communities about their risk. They also help train health professionals to enhance health programs that serve minority groups.

Environmental justice will be achieved when everyone enjoys the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards and equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, work, learn, and play.

To access the most accurate and relevant health information that affects you, your family and your community, please visit www.cdc.gov.

CDC also has an Office of Urban Affairs and an Office of Minority Health. These groups work directly to educate members of these communities about their risk. They also help train health professionals to enhance health programs that serve minority groups.

Environmental justice will be achieved when everyone enjoys the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards and equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, work, learn, and play.