

FACT SHEET: OIL REFINERIES AND TOXIC AIR POLLUTION

TOXIC AIR



Yudith Nieto holds an air sampler her family uses in the Manchester neighborhood of Houston which has been found to have dangerous levels of benzene. (Eric Kayne)

THE PROBLEM: Refineries release toxic air pollution, which can cause cancer, birth defects and chronic conditions like asthma, in communities in 32 states. About 90 million Americans live within 30 miles of at least one refinery, and many live near more than one.

Who's Most at Risk?

Children are disproportionately exposed to the emissions and resulting health threats from refineries. Additionally, people of color, including African Americans and Hispanic Americans, have a higher cancer risk from toxic air emissions from refineries than the average risk for the national population, as do adults living below the poverty level.

How Much Pollution Is In Our Air?

Refineries reported approximately 22,000 tons of hazardous air pollution to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 2010. However, underreporting is a serious problem. Studies have shown that actual toxic air emissions from many refinery sources, like flares, tanks, and cooling towers, can be 10 or even 100 times higher than what is reported to regulatory agencies. Emissions include a toxic soup of carcinogens, neurotoxins, and hazardous metals, such as benzene, hydrogen cyanide, and lead — to name a few.



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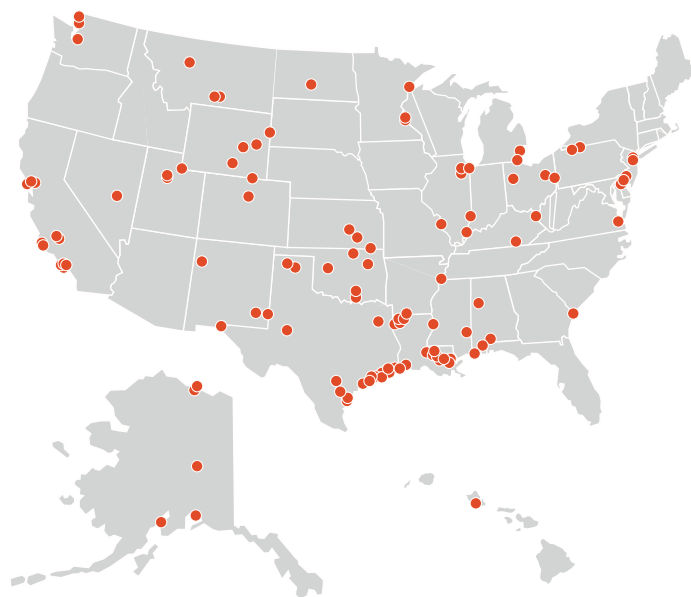
We Need Stronger Health Protection

Toxic releases from refineries, such as from flares, malfunctions, fugitive emissions (like leaks), and other uncontrolled or weakly regulated emission points, require new, enforceable limits and up-to-date monitoring, and there are effective methods available to reduce refineries' air pollution.

The Solution

In 2014, the EPA is slated to review air standards for refineries and decide the updates needed to protect the health of people living near them. For communities located near the fence line of these mega-polluters, the relief cannot come soon enough. Exposed communities need solidarity and support from people around the U.S. to ensure EPA adopts the most robust and protective limits on toxic air pollution.

Oil refineries coast to coast



GET INVOLVED!

Lend your voice to a coalition* of community organizations fighting for fresh air and fairness under the law.

Please contact Earthjustice:

(202) 745-5201 or visit earthjustice.org/refineries

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* Coalition Members include:

California Communities Against Toxics ~ Coalition For A Safe Environment ~ Del Amo Action Committee ~ Earthjustice ~ Environmental Integrity Project ~ Community In-Power and Development Association ~ Louisiana Bucket Brigade ~ Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services

