

## **Environmental Justice Questionnaire for Illinois Environmental Protection Agency**

*When answering the questions below please note if your answers are agency or program specific*

- 1. Do you consider environmental implications when working on an issue in your agency? For example, air, noise, and/or water pollution; soil contamination; nuisance odors; greenhouse gases; etc. If yes, please explain.**

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency has three separate bureaus that address air, water, and land. The Bureau of Air works to improve air quality by identifying air pollution problems, proposing appropriate regulations, conducting inspections, and reviewing permit applications. It also operates a vehicle emissions testing program. The Bureau of Land's goals are to protect human health and the environment by ensuring that hazardous and solid waste will be managed in a sound manner, and to reduce or control risk to human health and the environment by overseeing the cleanup of contaminated sites. The mission of the Bureau of Water is to ensure that Illinois' rivers, streams and lakes will support all uses for which they are designated including protection of aquatic life, recreation and drinking water supplies, make sure that every Illinois Public Water system will provide water that is consistently safe to drink, and to protect Illinois' groundwater resource for designated drinking water and other beneficial uses.

- 2. How do you determine or define the extent of environmental impacts on the community? Please provide examples.**

The Illinois EPA utilizes a number of methods to determine the extent of environmental impacts on communities. The Illinois EPA routinely reviews construction and operating permit applications that must provide information concerning the source's impacts on the environment, which in turn has the potential to impact communities. The Illinois EPA and the United States Environmental Protection Agency enforce numerous laws and regulations that are intended to be protective of human health. Part of the enforcement process is receiving citizen complaints, which gives the Illinois EPA valuable insight into impacts on a community. The Illinois EPA conducts inspections based on citizen complaints as well as routine inspections of sources. In addition, the Illinois EPA operates an extensive air monitoring network; gathers information through various recordkeeping and reporting requirements; and requires many sources to conduct testing of soil, water and air emissions.

**3. Do you have an environmental justice mandate for your agency? Yes/No. If yes, please explain.**

Illinois EPA defines Environmental Justice as follows: "Environmental Justice" is based on the principle that all people should be protected from environmental pollution and have the right to a clean and healthy environment. Environmental justice is the protection of the health of the people of Illinois and its environment, equity in the administration of the State's environmental programs, and the provision of adequate opportunities for meaningful involvement of all people with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

The key goals of the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency's Environmental Justice Policy are as follows:

- To ensure that communities are not disproportionately impacted by degradation of the environment or receive a less than equitable share of environmental protection and benefits;
- To strengthen the public's involvement in environmental decision-making, including permitting and regulation, and where practicable, enforcement matters;
- To ensure that Illinois EPA personnel use a common approach to addressing EJ issues; and
- To ensure that the Illinois EPA continues to refine its environmental justice strategy to ensure that it continues to protect the health of the citizens of Illinois and its environment, promotes environmental equity in the administration of its programs, and is responsive to the communities it serves.

To read the full policy visit the webpage below:

<http://www.epa.state.il.us/environmental-justice/policy.html>

**4. Do you assess the impact of projects on low-income and minority communities? If so, how?**

Yes, the Illinois EPA developed a geographic based computer tool to analyze demographics near sources regulated by the Agency to determine if they are located in or near communities predominately low-income and/or minority. The Illinois EPA also utilizes similar resources made available by the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

**5. Does your agency have programs that address the issues of handicapped and/or elderly populations?**

The Illinois EPA does not have programs that address the issues of handicapped and/or elderly populations.

**6. Identify staff positions that work with low-income; minority; elderly and/or handicapped populations and communities.**

Environmental Justice Officer

Environmental Justice Liaison

Bureau of Air Community Relations Staff

Bureau of Water Community Relations Staff

Bureau of Land Community Relations Staff

**7. Does your agency have a community involvement/community engagement plan? If yes, explain the plan and specify whether it is general or project specific.**

Illinois EPA has an Environmental Justice Public Participation Policy. This policy covers the following activities: Permitting transactions; Remediation projects in the Bureau of Land (except for projects covered by the Superfund Community Involvement Policy); Complaint investigations, and Enforcement.

The Environmental Justice Public Participation Policy sets forth that an effective public participation strategy emphasizes early and meaningful public involvement throughout the permitting process. In order to achieve meaningful public involvement the agency has provided public participation options in potential environmental justice communities. These public participation options are as follows:

- Community Outreach- This includes environmental justice notifications; public notices; fact sheets, and encouraging the permit applicant(s) to meet with community stakeholders to promote open dialogue early in the permitting process for appropriate permitting actions.
- Public Meetings- For permitting transactions, the purpose of the meeting is to inform the residents in and around a potential EJ Area of the scope and nature of

the project in a timely, interactive manner and explain the permitting process. Informational meetings may be held prior to a public hearing or may be held when a public hearing is not required.

- Fact Sheet and Project Summary- Illinois EPA will provide a plain language summary of the major aspects of the proposed project, including the purpose and location of the proposed activity and facility, and any anticipated environmental impacts, and any controls or work practices that will limit those impacts.
- Document Availability- Illinois EPA will take every effort to make information available to residents in potential EJ Areas in a timely and efficient manner.

To read the full policy visit the webpage below:

<http://www.epa.state.il.us/environmental-justice/public-participation-policy.pdf>

**8. How does your agency accommodate communities that are non-native English speakers? For example, providing an interpreter at a community meeting, translating documents, etc.**

When appropriate Illinois EPA provides bi- or multi-lingual public notices. Illinois EPA will make a good faith effort to provide a translator when it is known that residents do not speak English very well or when the Illinois EPA receives a request for a translator within two weeks of any public hearing or meeting and when the need for a translator is adequately justified.

**9. Does your agency partner with community interest groups, if so who are they?**

Illinois EPA partners with community interest stakeholders in many facets of the agency's work. In regard to environmental justice the agency partners with community interest groups formally through the Illinois Environmental Justice Commission and the Environmental Justice Advisory Group.

The agency partners with community interest groups when doing public outreach in their communities. The agency also partners with these groups when they have community-based career and educational events.

**10. The Mud-to Garden project is an example of how state agencies can work together to address an environmental justice concern. Can you give an example of an opportunity where your agency could partner with one or more agencies on the EJ Commission to address an environmental justice concern?**

The Agency works with the following agencies:

1. The Illinois EPA works with the Department of Natural Resources on coal mine permitting issues. The IEPA is responsible for ensuring that discharges from the mines do not adversely impact the environment and waters of the state.
2. The Illinois EPA financially supports the Small Business Environmental Assistance Program at the Department of Commerce and economic Opportunity. This program provides technical assistance to bring business into compliance with environmental regulations. Over 95% of the businesses are located in urban and environmental justice areas (auto body shop, auto mechanic shops, printers, etc).
3. The Illinois EPA has a close partnership with Illinois Department of Public Health on toxicology determinations when there is a release of contamination into the environment to inform the public of any health advisories, i.e., drinking water, fishing and safe occupancy. Subsistence fishing is a very common in EJ communities and pollution into the waters of the state does adversely impact this common practice.