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ILLINIOS EPA  
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE  
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION POLICY  
APRIL 20, 2018

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**I. TITLE:** Illinois EPA Environmental Justice Public Participation Policy

**II. PURPOSE:** This policy explains the methods by which the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (Illinois EPA or Agency) will engage with the public in communities located in identified areas of Environmental Justice (EJ) concern by the Illinois EPA

Illinois EPA defines “area of EJ concern” as a census block group or areas within one mile of a census block group with income below poverty and/or minority population greater than twice the statewide average.

The Illinois EPA has developed a Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping tool call EJ START to identify census block groups and areas within one mile of census block groups meeting the EJ demographic screening criteria. EJ START is publicly available and can be found on the Illinois EPA’s EJ webpage (<http://www.epa.illinois.gov/topics/environmental-justice/index>).

The Illinois EPA’s EJ public participation policy focuses on public outreach in the context of permitting transactions but may be applied to additional Illinois EPA matters.

**III. RESPONSIBLE PERSON:** The Environmental Justice Officer (EJO) has primary responsibility for coordinating all EJ efforts on behalf of the Illinois EPA and will act as the spokesperson for the Illinois EPA on EJ.

The Office of Community Relations will have a lead role in preparing the public participation plans, establishing local information repositories and conducting community meetings. The Bureaus and the Office of Community Relations will coordinate on the preparation and issuance of public notices and fact sheets.

The EJO is the contact person for citizens and communities in areas of EJ concern. The EJO will serve as a liaison between the citizen or community and the relevant Illinois EPA personnel to seek resolution of any issues raising EJ concerns.

#### **IV. ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED BY THE EJO:**

##### **A. Permitting transactions.**

1. Illinois EPA's EJ public participation policy applies to permitting transactions likely to generate significant public interest.
2. If the source involved in the permitting transaction is a High Priority Violator per USEPA guidance or is the subject of an enforcement action (i.e., has been referred to a prosecutorial agency such as the Illinois Attorney General's Office), Illinois EPA will take additional outreach measures as discussed below.

##### **B. Complaint Investigations**

1. Illinois EPA will timely respond to complaints from areas of EJ concern received by the EJO.

2. EJO will apprise complainants of the results of the investigations.

### C. Enforcement

1. The EJO will act as liaison for citizens and community groups located in areas of EJ concern to keep communities apprised of an enforcement action's status.
2. Illinois EPA will continue to solicit ideas for the Supplemental Environmental Project Bank.
3. Enforcement Orders may be viewed at:  
[www.epa.state.il.us/enforcement/orders/](http://www.epa.state.il.us/enforcement/orders/).

## V. COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROCEDURES

- A. An effective public participation strategy emphasizes early and meaningful public involvement throughout the permitting process or other Illinois EPA activities.
- B. Each Bureau will review permit applications and other actions identified herein to determine whether the action will take place in an area of EJ concern as determined by the Illinois EPA EJ Start tool.
- C. For areas of EJ concern, the EJO will recommend the appropriate outreach, if any, based on, among other considerations, the type of permit, potential impact of the project or Agency action, type of source and level of interest.

## D. Public participation options in areas of EJ concern

1. Community Outreach by Regulated Entity/Source/Permit Applicant
  - a. Illinois EPA will encourage the permit applicant to meet with community stakeholders to promote open dialogue early in the permitting process for permitting actions likely to be of significant public interest. Meaningful public outreach often occurs prior to the submission of a permit application to the Agency.
    - i. The applicant is encouraged to provide notice to residents located in an area of EJ concern of the proposed project and provide basic information about the project to interested community members.
    - ii. The applicant is also encouraged to develop a Community Relations Plan to structure ongoing dialogue with neighboring communities. Information concerning Community Relations Plans, including examples, may be found at 35 Ill. Adm. Code Part 1600, Appendix A.
2. Community Outreach by Illinois EPA
  - a. Notifications
    - i. Illinois EPA will provide the community with information regarding proposed projects via EJ notifications, which are mailed to community leaders, public officials, environmental groups, concerned citizens and the permit applicant.

ii. Public Notices will be written in terminology and languages easily understood by the majority of readers, except where specific public notice language is otherwise required. When required, notices will be placed in legal notice sections or other sections of local publications.

b. Public Meetings and Hearings

- i. Informational meetings – The Illinois EPA and/or the source may hold an informational meeting or availability session.
- ii. For permitting transactions, the purpose of the meeting is to inform the residents in areas of EJ concern of the scope and nature of the project in a timely, interactive manner and to 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.
- iii. Informational meetings may also be held to explain enforcement related matters or other Illinois EPA activities that are of concern to the public.
- iv. The 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.

c. Fact Sheet and Project Summary

- i. 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, any anticipated environmental impacts, and any controls or work practices that will limit those impacts.
- ii. Illinois EPA will make fact sheets available on the Agency's webpage. Written fact sheets and other available information will be made available for persons without internet access when requested.
- iii. As appropriate, the Illinois EPA will translate fact sheets into the predominate language of the community if it is not English.

d. Document Availability

- i. Information is available from the Illinois EPA through document repositories, the Illinois EPA's webpage and the Illinois Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)  
(<http://www.epa.illinois.gov/foia/index>)

- ii. The EJO will assist citizens and groups in identifying available information relevant to EJ concerns.