

Overlay Glossary



Washington Environmental Health Disparities (EHD) Map

Background

The places where we live, work, and play affect our health — as does our social environment. These factors overlap and interact. Pollution, cost of living, and other social conditions don't happen on their own. They combine with the ongoing impacts of racism, colonization, and other injustices to affect community health.

The primary goal for the Environmental Health Disparities (EHD) map is to identify communities most affected by environmental health risks. The tool ranks these risks by census tract, highlighting communities most burdened by the cumulative impacts of pollution. It also identifies environmental health measures by census tract — providing data-driven insights for communities, policymakers, government leaders, and others.

Overlays are different from measures. They are data layers that can be added to the map to provide additional context and visual support. They do not contribute to a community's environmental health risk score.

This document provides overlay descriptions and why they are important to include on the EHD map. Information about how to use the overlays and the data sources is available on [Overlays: How To and Data Sources](#).

Airport Runways

Airplanes create a lot of noise and air pollution, including emissions from aviation fuel. These can affect the health of people living nearby. Children, older adults, people with less financial opportunity, and individuals who work in or near airports are more likely to have health impacts.

City Limits

City limits shape how local governments make decisions about services, funding, and infrastructure. These decisions can affect what resources and environmental factors communities experience. Some communities may feel these impacts more than others, including historically minoritized communities, people with fewer financial resources, and those living close to city limit boundaries.

Cleanup Sites

Cleanup sites can be small, like fixing a leak from an underground tank, or large and complicated, requiring more advanced cleanup methods. Mapping these locations is important because contamination can affect the soil, water, and air in nearby communities and ecosystems. People who may be most affected include historically minoritized communities, children, older adults, individuals with fewer financial resources, and those who live or work close to these sites.

County Boundaries

County boundaries show where each county's authority begins and ends. Tribal boundaries is a different overlay and do not follow county boundaries. Mapping county boundaries is important because counties help decide how public health services are provided, how land is used, and how resources are shared. These decisions can affect people's daily lives and the services available to them. The impact may be greater for historically minoritized communities, children, older adults, people with fewer financial resources, and those living near county borders.

Dry Cleaners

Dry cleaners are important to map because some dry-cleaning chemicals can release harmful substances into the air, soil, and groundwater. When that happens, nearby neighborhoods can be affected. People most at risk include historically minoritized communities, children, older adults, individuals with fewer financial resources, and those who live or work closest to these locations.

Electric Utilities-Investor

Mapping service areas for all investor-owned electric utility companies helps utilities see which highly impacted communities they serve. This information supports their responsibilities under the 2019 Clean Energy Transformation Act (CETA), which requires utilities to move toward clean energy in ways that benefit their customers. People who may be most affected by utility decisions include historically minoritized communities and individuals with fewer financial resources.

For more information about the Department of Health's role in CETA, visit the CETA webpage: <https://doh.wa.gov/data-statistical-reports/washington-tracking-network-wtn/climate-projections/clean-energy-transformation-act>

Electric Utilities-Public

Service areas for all public electric utility companies helps utilities see which highly impacted communities they serve and supports their work to meet the requirements of the 2019 Clean Energy Transformation Act (CETA). Decisions about energy planning, infrastructure, and investments can affect many people, especially historically minoritized communities and individuals with fewer financial resources.

For more information about the Department of Health's role in CETA, visit the CETA webpage: <https://doh.wa.gov/data-statistical-reports/washington-tracking-network-wtn/climate-projections/clean-energy-transformation-act>

Former Orchard Lands

Some pesticides used in past orchards — like lead-arsenate — can stay in the soil for a long time. People who live, work, or go to school on or near these old orchard sites may still be exposed to this contamination. Those most affected may include historically minoritized communities, children, older adults, individuals with fewer financial resources, and people living closest to these areas.

Hazardous Waste Sites

Hazardous waste can come from many types of activities and can be a liquid, solid, gas, or sludge. Mapping these sites matters because hazardous waste can affect the air, soil, and water in nearby communities and ecosystems. People who may be most affected include historically minoritized communities, children, older adults, individuals with fewer financial resources, people with existing health conditions, and those who live or work closest to these sites.

Historical Redlining

Redlining shaped where money and resources were invested – and where they weren't – for many decades. These decisions created long-lasting environmental and health impacts that are still felt today, especially by historically minoritized communities and people with fewer financial resources.

These maps are available for Spokane, Seattle, and Tacoma, which are the only cities in Washington where Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) created redlining maps.

Languages Spoken at Home

This overlay shows where Washington's culturally and linguistically diverse communities live. This information can help schools and other organizations provide translation, interpretation, and other language support where it's needed most. People most affected include multilingual households, immigrant and refugee families, Tribal communities, and students who rely on language-access services to fully participate in school and community life.

Legislative Districts

Legislative districts determine who represents each area in the state legislature and influence how policies, resources, and services are distributed. Because boundaries can differ from place to place, they can affect community priorities and how well people's needs are met. Those most affected include historically minoritized communities, people with fewer financial resources, and anyone living near district borders where representation can change from one side of the line to the other.

Licensed Childcare Centers

Access to safe, reliable childcare supports family well-being, early childhood development, and stable communities. Childcare availability can differ a lot from one neighborhood to another, which can make it harder for some families to find the care they need. Those most affected include young children, working parents and caregivers, families with fewer financial resources, and communities facing childcare shortages.

Long Term Care Nursing Homes

These facilities provide essential medical care and daily living support for people who need ongoing assistance. Access to quality care can differ depending on where someone lives, which can affect their health and well-being. People most affected include older adults, individuals with disabilities, caregivers, and families looking for long-term care options for their loved ones.

Long Term Residential Care

These facilities provide essential support for people who need help with daily activities, medical care, or specialized services. Access to these types of care can vary depending on the community, which affects the options available to residents and their families. Those most impacted include older adults, people with disabilities or complex care needs, caregivers, and families looking for long-term care for their loved ones.

Ozone Peak Annual Concentration

Higher ozone can worsen air quality and lead to breathing and heart problems. People most affected include children, older adults, people with asthma or other lung conditions, outdoor workers, and communities with fewer financial resources who may have fewer ways to avoid exposure.

PM2.5 Annual Concentration

Long-term exposure to these tiny particles can harm heart and lung health and contribute to chronic diseases. People most affected include children, older adults, individuals with asthma or other breathing problems, outdoor workers, and communities with fewer financial resources who may have fewer ways to reduce exposure.

PM2.5 Daily Concentration

Short-term increases in particle pollution can cause breathing problems, make chronic conditions worse, and lead to more hospital visits. People most affected include children, older adults, individuals with asthma or heart and lung conditions, outdoor workers, and communities with fewer financial resources.

Railroads

Trains using railroads can create noise, vibrations, and air pollution, and rail traffic which can affect safety and how land is used in nearby areas. People most impacted include historically minoritized communities, children, older adults, individuals with fewer financial resources, and anyone living or working close to major railroads.

Superfund Sites

Contamination from superfund sites can affect soil, water, and air for many years. Cleanup is happening through the federal Superfund program, but people living nearby may still face environmental and health risks. Those most affected include historically minoritized communities, children, older adults, individuals with fewer financial resources, and people who live closest to these sites.

Tacoma Smelter Plume

Long-term exposure to arsenic, lead and other heavy metal contaminants can affect people's health, especially for those who live, work, or spend time in affected neighborhoods. Those most impacted include children, older adults, historically minoritized communities, individuals with fewer financial resources, and anyone who may come into contact with contaminated soil.

For more detailed maps related to the City of Tacoma, visit the Tacoma Maps Portal: [TacomaMaps](#).

Temporary Worker Housing

The quality of temporary housing can affect the health, safety, and well-being of the workers who live there — often people in seasonal or agricultural jobs. Access to clean, safe, and stable housing can vary a lot, which may increase risks for some groups. Those most impacted include migrant and seasonal workers, historically minoritized communities, individuals with fewer financial resources, and families who rely on temporary housing during work seasons.

Transportation Noise

Being exposed to loud noise over long periods can affect sleep, stress, learning, and overall health. Communities located closest to major roads, rail lines, or flight paths often experience the most noise. Those most affected include historically minoritized communities, children, older adults, people with fewer financial resources, and anyone living or working near busy transportation routes.

Tribal Census Tracts

Mapping Tribal census tracts is important because Tribal lands are included in the 'overburdened community' definition in the Healthy Environment for All and Climate Commitment Acts (CCA). We want these areas to be clearly visible to agencies that are directed to eliminate environmental and health disparities by directing expenditures to these communities. This overlay includes census tracts that contain any Tribal reservation, off-reservation Tribal lands, or disputed lands.

Tribal Health Services

Tribal communities can face unique challenges in accessing healthcare, and knowing where facilities are located helps show what resources are available to support community health. Access to culturally grounded care can vary from place to place, which can affect health outcomes for people who depend on these services. Those most impacted include Tribal community members, elders, children, and people living in rural or underserved areas.

Tribal Land Boundaries

This overlay includes:

- Reservations: Lands officially recognized as Tribal reservations by the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs.
- Disputed lands: Areas considered part of a reservation but where the land ownership is contested.
- Off-reservation Tribal lands: Lands outside reservation boundaries that Tribes have purchased or that are held in trust for Tribal use, based on county parcel data.

Mapping these lands is important because Tribal sovereignty and access to resources depend on land status and jurisdiction. Knowing where these boundaries are helps support proper planning, environmental protection, and respectful collaboration with Tribal Nations. People most impacted include Tribal community members, Tribal governments, and those living or working near Tribal lands – especially in places where land management or access to resources differs from nearby areas.

Watershed Boundaries

A watershed is an area of land where rain and snowmelt drain into the same stream, river, or lake. Mapping watersheds is important because things like water quality, flooding, habitat health, and environmental planning all depend on how water moves through an area. Pollution, development, and land use changes inside a watershed can affect the communities and environments downstream. People most impacted include households that rely on local waterways, historically minoritized communities, people with fewer financial resources, Tribal communities, and anyone living in areas prone to flooding or erosion.

For More Information

To learn more about the EHD Map update process and detailed methods, please refer to the [EHD Map Report](#).

Contact Us

For questions or more information, email EHDMap@doh.wa.gov.



DOH 334-604 February 2026 CS

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