

Asthma: Air Quality

Health Equity Council

Executive statement

Interventions for reducing asthma risk require multi-sectoral approaches addressing the Structural and Social Determinants of Health. Exposure to air pollution is a major negative factor, contributing to new incidents, exacerbation and emergency department visits.

Background

A Public Health response to Asthma requires multi-level interventions for various contributing factors (see HEC one-pager: “Asthma: A Public Health Response in Albuquerque”). Asthma is a lung disorder characterized by symptoms of coughing, wheezing, dyspnea, and discomfort with breathing. Exposure to air pollution is a major negative factor, contributing to new incidents, exacerbation and emergency department visits. Air pollution as a result of industrial, traffic or other built environment pollutants and the growing effects of climate change (longer pollen seasons due to increased temperatures) disproportionately affects low income and/or people of color communities.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Air Monitoring

Air monitoring stations: Community engagement & education campaign about air quality and installation of air quality monitoring stations in the following communities: San Jose, Mountain View, the Greater Gardener* and others inside or close proximity to daily industrial emissions.

Recommendation 2: Green Spaces

Tree Canopies. Improves local air quality and reduces exposure to harmful air pollutants (including pollen). Addresses climate change, increased pollen seasons due to warmer temperatures. Reduces stress, a contributor to asthma and other chronic illnesses resulting in emergency department visits.

Recommendation 3: Zoning Laws

Buffer zones around schools, community centers, hospitals, childcare centers, etc. Consider amending local Air Quality Regulation to support the 2017 Bernalillo County/Albuquerque Comprehensive Plan in addressing community health. Consider a Health in All Policies approach.

Recommendation 4: Quality Housing

Quality housing is shown to reduce the risk of asthma symptoms. Interventions should address ventilation, pest control, indoor smoking and weatherization. Consider providing grants or other resources for residential housing improvements and strengthen and/or increase funding for code enforcement on rental properties.

Recommendation 5: Traffic

Consider race and health equity in Environmental Assessments, Health Impact Assessments and/or other studies on the impact of community health. Often, industrial businesses propose development on the “fringe” of cities and typically the communities directly impacted by such development are low income, under served, Black, Hispanic or Indigenous communities. Include proposed truck routes, and increased traffic in proposed, plans, and projects.

Recommendation 6: Cumulative Impacts

Increase resources to City Department of Environmental Health to conduct cumulative impact studies using census tract data. Health and racial equity must be central to the studies. Cumulative Impact has been a consistent concern/recommendation in health impact assessments or other studies conducted by the afore named communities*