

Environmental Justice

for Businesses



What is Environmental Justice?

The term “environmental justice” means that no group of people including a racial, ethnic, or socio-economic group should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from the establishment or expansion of a facility. EJ is defined in detail and it is imbedded into numerous federal and State laws. Regulatory agencies such as the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) are legally obligated to enforce these requirements.

New and expanding businesses can save a considerable amount of time and money by factoring environmental justice into their plans, and by applying the kinds of practices described below.

Maryland is committed to EJ. Across the United States, Maryland is known as a champion for causes related to environmental equity and revitalization of communities.

Guide of Business Best Practices for EJ

Identify stakeholders and friends. Create a list of community organizations, local and State legislators, etc.

Offer Solutions. As part of the design process, identify potential environmental risks of the proposed project and offer possible solutions:

- Air emissions
- Water quality
- Visual appearance
- Car and truck traffic
- Noise

Identify potential benefits of the proposed project, such as:

- Jobs for the community
- Road improvements
- Improved landscaping
- Cleaning up legacy environmental problems

Create an action plan. Figure out how to best reach your stakeholders.

- Direct the outreach to specific community organizations and institutions that will be affected by the project.
- Consider the most effective way to reach your audience: outdoor signs, newspapers, press releases, advertisements, social media, and/or SMS.
- Give notice to residents in plain language, not legalese, and translate documents into appropriate languages relative to the community.

Take action.

- Hold pre-application meetings with community members and community organizations that will be affected by the proposed facility. Consider scheduling a meeting at a time that is convenient for community members.
- Explain to the community why your business chose the particular location.
- Participate in a pre-application meeting with MDE.
- Write a memorandum of understanding/agreement involving your company, the local community, and possibly MDE. This can be either a memorialized community benefits agreement or a rules of engagement agreement.

Keep in touch. Continue to engage and notify the community throughout the permitting process and after permit approval. This includes notifying the community when the permit scope changes or environmental studies occur.

Maryland Environmental Justice Resources

The Commission of Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities:

The Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities (CEJSC) is tasked with examining issues related to environmental justice and sustainable communities associated with creating healthy, safe, economically vibrant, and environmentally sound communities for all Marylanders through a democratic process and community involvement.

http://www.mde.state.md.us/programs/CrossMedia/EnvironmentalJustice/EJImplementationinMaryland/Pages/programs/multimedialograms/environmental_justice/implementation/details.aspx

Case Studies:

MDE can provide case studies of local Maryland businesses implementing some EJ best practices.

The Maryland Department of the Environment:

<http://www.mde.state.md.us/programs/CrossMedia/EnvironmentalJustice>

Have suggestions or comments?

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