



CEJA Environmental Justice Principles for Policy Implementation at Regulatory Agencies

The California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA) and our members have developed the following principles to assess whether agencies are effectively integrating environmental justice (EJ) into their policy development and implementation.

- (1) **Prioritize and value prevention, human health and improving quality of life:** Impacts on health must be given full weight in decision-making, not overlooked in favor of business interests or cost effectiveness, as is often the case, and particular concern must be given to the health and well-being of residents in highly impacted neighborhoods.
- (2) **Do no harm:** Regulatory agencies must commit to actions that do not further harms in environmental justice communities. The most egregious decisions are those that actively exacerbate environmental health and justice inequalities.
- (3) **Prioritize environmental justice communities:** State regulatory agencies have a responsibility to address the historic legacy of pollution in low-income communities and communities of color. This goes beyond simply preventing future harms, but also providing redress for the impacts of long-standing, disproportionate burdens of pollution. There is an ethical, environmental and public health imperative to ensure environmental justice communities are prioritized for resources, programs, and receive special consideration within regulatory decision-making by state agencies.
- (4) **Meaningful community engagement:** Residents in environmental justice communities must have the ability and opportunity to inform design and implementation for policies that impact their health and quality of life. Many agencies use a flawed “decide, announce, defend,” process whereby an agency determines and releases documentation on a policy devoid of any community input, engages with environmental justice communities in public discussions after-the-fact, and ultimately moves forward with implementing their initial proposed policy without incorporating significant feedback from environmental justice communities. Other times, community organizations and members are engaged in dialogue but agencies do not alter any decisions even after hearing significant feedback. Environmental justice communities must be engaged early, often and in a meaningful way.
- (5) **Responsiveness:** Agencies must respond, and be willing to address, community concerns once they have been articulated rather than simply noting them in the public record. Without a clear commitment to responsiveness, community engagement efforts become a “check box” rather than a meaningful attempt to work with stakeholders in policy design and implementation.

- (6) **Accountability:** Agencies must be accountable for any and all actions, or lack of action, commitments made, and decision-making processes that result in or perpetuate harm to environmental justice communities, related to the agency's area of jurisdiction.
- (7) **Transparency:** Agencies must be clear in: (a) detailing the processes by which all decisions are made and regularly reviewing the processes to ensure accessibility by environmental justice communities, (b) disclosing all factors and stakeholders that inform and influence all decisions affecting all policies and projects, and (c) describing decisions made, in addition to upholding the principles of engagement and responsiveness outlined above.
- (8) **Proactive partnerships:** To be truly stellar on environmental justice issues, agencies need to work proactively and in partnership with environmental justice communities and organizations to develop innovative ways of addressing key environmental justice issues.