

San Francisco Bay Area Community Health Protection Program



Assembly Bill 617 (C. Garcia, Chapter 136, Statutes of 2017) may be one of the most impactful air quality regulations in the last 35 years. AB 617 requires local air districts to increase their focus on local air pollution in overburdened communities, in addition to the traditional regionwide attainment of state and federal pollution standards. Communities overburdened by air pollution are often the same communities that have been historically subject to discriminatory federal, state and local policies (e.g. redlining, urban renewal, highway construction and local zoning codes), disinvestment, limited access to health services and healthy food, quality education, and local parks and open spaces. These same communities are most often low-income communities of color.

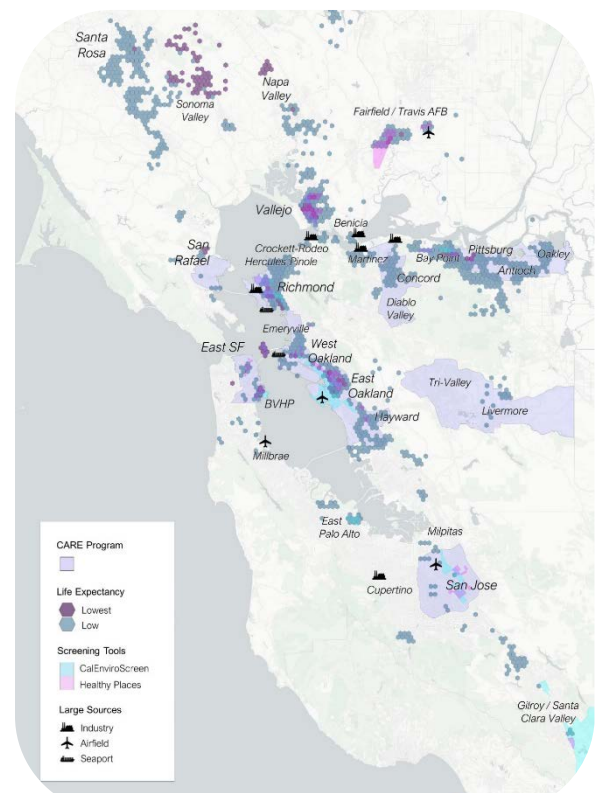
AB 617 was signed into law in 2017, alongside AB 398 which extended California's cap-and-trade program for greenhouse gas emissions. AB 617 was delivered as a compromise with environmental justice groups opposed to the extension of the cap-and-trade program. Environmental justice advocates generally oppose cap-and-trade because it is perceived to be a program that allows large industries to continue polluting local communities.

AB 617 requires the California Air Resources Board, with input from community groups, air districts and others, to select locations from around the state to prepare community-led plans to reduce emissions of toxic air contaminants and criteria pollutants. Communities can also be selected to do community-led monitoring. The primary requirement for community selection is a demonstrated high cumulative exposure burden to air pollution and associated health vulnerabilities. In the Bay Area, and around the state, these communities are often the same communities that are home to large industrial facilities covered under cap-and-trade; they are also often low-income communities of color. (See <http://www.baaqmd.gov/community-health/community-health-protection-program> for more information on community selection in the Bay Area and AB 617.)

A Community-Driven Process

Throughout 2018, Bay Area residents worked with the Air District to select communities for action under AB 617. Residents wanted to give top priority to areas impacted by oil refineries and other large industries, odors and woodsmoke, as well as places near congested transportation corridors and those that have a history of air quality violations, contamination and environmental injustice. Specific areas recommended included Antioch, Bay Point, Benicia, Concord, Crockett, East Oakland, Fairfield, Livermore, Marin, Milpitas, Napa, Oakley, Pittsburg, Redwood City, Richmond, Rodeo, San Francisco, San Jose, San Leandro, San Pablo, Vallejo and West Oakland.

On September 27, 2018, the California Air Resources Board approved the Air District's recommended communities for monitoring and emission reduction planning. The state approved communities for year 1 of the program, as well as communities that would move forward over the next five years. Bay Area recommendations included all the Air District's Community Air Risk Evaluation or CARE areas, as well as areas with large sources of air pollution (refineries, seaports, airports, etc.), areas identified via statewide screening tools as having pollution and/or health burden vulnerability, and areas with low life expectancy.



High Cumulative Exposure Burden Areas, SF Bay Area

West Oakland, Community Action Plan

West Oakland was selected for an emission reduction plan in year 1 of the AB 617 program. The West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project (WOEIP) is our partner in this effort. They have a long history of community planning and advocacy to reduce residents' exposure to diesel particulate matter and toxic air contaminants. WOEIP has been instrumental in bringing air pollution and its related health effects to the forefront of research and planning activities in West Oakland. They are uniquely positioned to engage quickly and effectively in an action planning effort and will likely serve as a model in future plans.

West Oakland is bounded by the Port of Oakland, the Union Pacific rail yard, and I-580, I-880, and I-980 freeways. Maritime-freight industries, the rail yard and rail lines, large distribution centers, cement and asphalt plants, a power plant, metal facilities, small to medium industrial and manufacturing operations, major freeways and busy roadways used as trucking routes all impact West Oakland residential neighborhoods. These sources contribute to high levels of particulate matter concentrations and elevated cancer risk from toxic air contaminants. West Oakland is considered one of the most impacted areas in the Bay Area due to the many sources of diesel particulate matter in the area. Unknown additional impacts may occur due to the redevelopment of the Oakland Army Base.

Approximately 25,000 people live in the West Oakland area. West Oakland is predominantly a low-income and high health-burden community. The community has high levels of environmental exposures and experiences social and economic disadvantages. People living in West Oakland experience more asthma emergency room visits, higher rates of cardiovascular disease, greater unemployment, lower educational attainment, high housing cost burden, lower life expectancy and higher incidences of poverty than most other areas in Alameda County.

Year 1: Richmond, Community Air Monitoring

Richmond was selected for a community monitoring plan in year 1 of the AB 617 program. The Richmond area is in western Contra Costa County and includes most of the City of Richmond and portions of El Cerrito. It also includes communities just north and east of Richmond, such as San Pablo and several unincorporated communities, including North Richmond. There are a complex mix of emission sources in the Richmond area. It is home to a large refinery and chemical plant, a seaport, organic waste and metal facilities, small to medium industrial and manufacturing facilities, high volume freeways and roadways, a railyard and rail lines. Our primary goals of the Richmond monitoring effort are to leverage historic and current monitoring studies, to better characterize the area's mix of sources, and to more fully understand the associated air quality and pollution impacts.

Approximately 100,000 people live in the Richmond area. The area is interspersed with low-income, high health-burden communities. Areas throughout Richmond experience social or economic disadvantages, as well as health burdens that increase vulnerability to environmental exposures. People living in the Richmond area, especially North Richmond and the Iron Triangle, experience more asthma emergency room visits, higher rates of cardiovascular disease, greater unemployment, lower educational attainment, high housing cost burden, lower life expectancy and higher incidences of poverty than in other areas of Contra Costa County. While regional monitoring show levels of pollution consistent with other urban areas in the Bay Area, the high health burden and combination of numerous types of industrial sources makes the area especially suited for a community-scale monitoring.

Years 2-5 Communities

East Oakland/San Leandro, Eastern San Francisco, the Pittsburg-Bay Point area, San Jose, Tri-Valley, and Vallejo are slated for action in years 2-5 of the AB 617 program. Like Richmond and West Oakland, these communities have higher levels of environmental exposures and more significant health burdens compared to the rest of the Bay Area. These health burdens increase vulnerability to environmental exposures. Over the next several years, we will be working to build capacity in these communities for future planning and/or community air monitoring. Building partnerships and developing a shared understanding of local air quality issues, combined with lessons learned from the year 1 activities, will provide strong foundation for improving air quality and health in the years 2-5 communities.