

Handbook for Communities Facing Environmental Hazards



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This Handbook was created by the Environmental Poverty Law Program, a statewide initiative of Legal Aid of North Carolina, Inc. which provides free legal advice and representation on environmental issues to low-income residents of North Carolina.

Our Mission:

To provide low-income communities and residents of North Carolina with the tools necessary to ensure a safe and healthy environment in their homes, at their jobs and in their communities.

The Handbook was created with the assistance of the following staff members of Legal Aid of North Carolina, Inc.: Nicole Gooding-Ray, Melany Earnhardt and George Hausen.

Special thanks also goes to the numerous student volunteers who performed research for the handbook and the many individuals who reviewed and edited the handbook.

Please Note that the *Handbook for Communities Facing Environmental Hazards* is meant to give you general information. It is not meant to give you specific advice on your situation.

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This Handbook is a work-in-progress. If you have any questions, comments or concerns, please contact us:

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Introduction

The Handbook for Communities Facing Environmental Hazards was created to help communities address environmental problems.

The first five chapters of the Handbook provide information on different tools that can be used to fight environment hazards:

1. Community Organizing
2. Research
3. The Media, Public Meetings & the Internet
4. Legal Assistance
5. Putting Pressure on Governments and Corporations.

The chapters use a question-and-answer format and include additional resources which can offer more help. Chapter Six provides information on specific environmental issues, such as safe drinking water and pesticides. Appendixes A and B list environmental organizations and government resources available to help community groups . Appendix C provides more detailed information and examples of some of the tools used throughout the Handbook.

If you are not sure whether your community is facing an environmental health threat, or what types of environmental hazards are present, you may want to complete the Community Environmental Health Assessment created by the Environmental Law Institute (ELI). You can find the Assessment at ELI's website: www.eli.org/pdf/commhealthassessment.pdf.



Introduction

Throughout the Handbook, you will notice that we have provided you with website addresses which you can access to obtain more information about a particular topic. There is an enormous amount of information on environmental issues now available on the Internet through the World Wide Web. This is an extremely valuable resource and one with which you should become familiar. You can get access to the Internet at your public library. Chapter Two provides you with a step by step guide to finding information on the Internet.



Since websites change frequently, you may find that some of the sites mentioned in this Handbook are out of date. We will do our best to keep them updated, but it will not always be possible. If you find a link to a site that is missing, try one of the search engines listed in Chapter Two to look for the missing site. Chapter Two also has information on how to use websites.