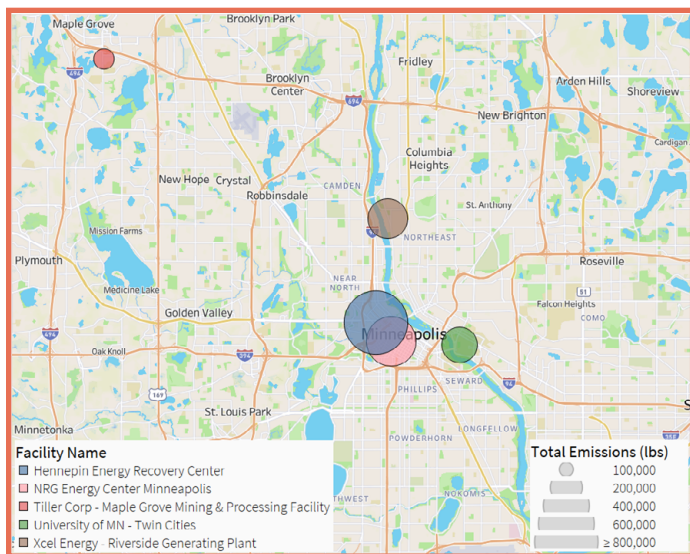


HERC and Environmental Injustices in Minneapolis



Located near Minneapolis' Target Field between Downtown and North Minneapolis is one of the state's most polluting hubs, home to several power plants and industrial operations.

For the 230,000 people living in adjacent neighborhoods – mostly made up of low-income folks and people of color – dirty air, chemical fumes, pungent odors, and the risk of poor health have become part of daily life.



The Top 5 Polluters in Hennepin County

The top five polluting facilities in Hennepin County are:

- 1 **Hennepin Energy Recovery Center (HERC)**
- 2 **NRG Energy Center Minneapolis**
- 3 **Tiller Corp asphalt processing facility**
- 4 **University of Minnesota Twin Cities**
- 5 **Xcel Energy Riverside Generating Plant**

Together, these facilities emit an alarming amount of air pollutants, way above levels safe for humans.

1.6 million pounds of nitrogen oxides

Tens of thousands of pounds of sulfur dioxides, particulate matter, and volatile organic compounds (VOCs)

(based on 2021 data)

Leading to poor health impacts:

- Increased respiratory issues**
- Poor cardiovascular health**
- Impaired lung development**
- Premature deaths**
- Cancer**
- Other adverse health outcomes**

Especially for vulnerable populations, like children, the elderly, and those with pre-existing conditions.

Scan for online resources:



This fact sheet is based on the following issue briefs from **Physicians, Scientists, and Engineers for Healthy Energy**:

- [Hennepin Energy Recovery Center: Public Health, Environmental, and Energy Equity Implications of the HERC](#) (November 2022)
- [Cumulative Burden Analysis for Zip Codes 55407 & 55411](#) (March 2023)

The pollution from these five facilities is associated with roughly \$50 million in health damages.* HERC alone contributes to \$16 million in health damages.

*Based on a 2023 analysis, this estimate includes mortalities, hospital admissions, asthma incidences, and lost work days. It does not account for the impact of hazardous air toxics, thus this estimate is likely to be underestimated.

Snapshot of HERC

HERC is a giant 3-stack trash incinerator owned by Hennepin County. Built in 1989, it generates a modest amount of electricity and heating for nearby buildings. It has **burned 1,000 tons of trash almost every day** in the middle of a dense, urban community.

Burning trash for energy is highly toxic.

When plastic falls into a campfire, we know to step away because the chemical fumes from burning plastic are harmful. Yet, these fumes are exactly the type of pollutants that communities living around trash incinerators **breathe every day... pollutants linked to cancer, brain damage, and reproductive complications.**

That's not all! **Over 200 heavy-duty trucks** deliver waste to HERC every day, releasing more health-damaging air pollutants to the neighborhoods they pass through.

Total Lead	12.1lbs	3rd in county
Nitrogen Oxides	404 tons	1st in county
Sulfur dioxide	12 tons	2nd in county
PM*2.5	21 tons	2nd in county
PM*10	23 tons	4th in county

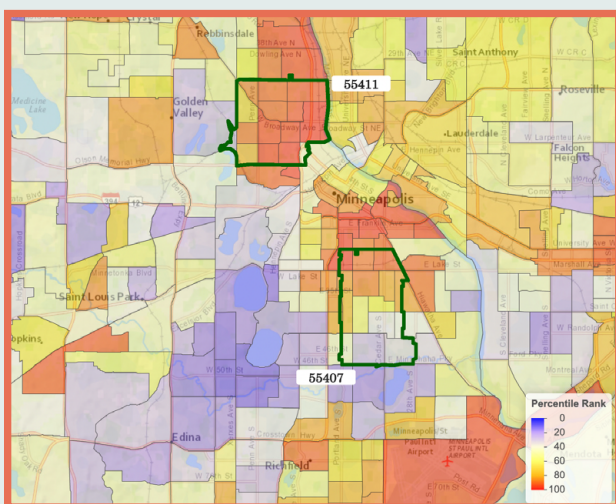
Who lives nearby and what does it mean for them?

The population within a 3-mile radius has:

- A higher concentration of **low-income households** than 89% of the state
- A higher percentage of **people of color** than 90% of the state
- More **linguistically isolated** people than 91% of the state
- Zip codes with the **2nd and 3rd highest rates of asthma** in the Minneapolis metro area (55411 and 55415)
- **For some neighborhoods, environmental pollution is just another challenge on top of a growing list:** the lack of family-supporting incomes; high utility bills; unemployment; homelessness; prevalence of asthma, cancer, diabetes; poor mental health.
- The **cumulative impact** of these environmental, socioeconomic, and health burdens, all in one place, can make it difficult to thrive, let alone survive.

A zip code should not determine someone's future!

Case Study: Zip Codes 55411 and 55407



In measuring the **cumulative impacts** of environmental, social, and health burdens:

- In zip code **55411**, 13 of the 16 census tracts rank worse than 90% of other census tracts in the state.
- In zip code **55407**, north side census tracts rank worse than 80% of other census tracts in the state.

Whenever I worked near the HERC, I noticed a much higher percentage of students with asthma... I kept extra inhalers and nebulizers for those with severe asthma, and sometimes these saved lives.
– A school nurse, zip code 55411

Source: [Environmental Justice Index](#), which compiles data on environmental burden and social and health vulnerabilities. Orange and red tracts are considered "overburdened priority communities." Based on 2022 data.