

HEALTH, POLLUTION, AND SAFETY: GUIDE TO COMMUNITY RESEARCH

Use the questions below as a guide to discovering which health and environmental issues exist in your community because of our transportation system.

Work in groups to discuss the questions and identify the ones you can't yet answer. For some questions you'll need to speak with people in your community or do research on the Internet.

POSSIBLE RESOURCES

- Local or state police or fire department
- U.S. Coast Guard
- State Department of Environmental Protection or Management
- Local or state board of health
- Regional Environmental Protection Agency office and its web site
- Service stations

1. **THE CHANGE FROM HORSE TO HORSELESS**

- a. Imagine the days when horses and buggies were the major form of transportation in your community. What were the major environmental and safety concerns?
- b. How have automobiles affected daily life? Think about the positive and negative effects. Do air pollution, traffic, or noise interfere with people's ability to enjoy walks or use bicycles for travel? How have environmental and safety issues changed as a result of the internal combustion engine and the widespread use of automobiles?

2. **SAFETY**

- a. Name some of the safety concerns related to using gasoline and other fluids in our cars.
- b. In the case of automobile accidents that release gasoline or other fluids, how do emergency personnel respond?

3. **LAND AND WATER POLLUTION**

- a. Do you know of any oil spills or major gasoline or diesel fuel leaks in or near your community? How were they cleaned up? What was done to protect the community and its land and water supplies?
- b. Small amounts of gasoline can render water unsafe to drink. Have you ever spilled (or seen someone spill) gasoline while filling up a gas tank? What happens to all the gasoline and oil that washes off pavements with rain?
- c. Automotive fluids, batteries, tires, and other car parts can also pollute the environment. How or where can they be recycled or safely disposed of?

4. **AIR QUALITY AND AIR POLLUTION**

- a. Are there any obvious sources of air pollution in your community? What do you notice?
- b. Have you or someone you know been affected by air pollution? If so, describe how.

EXTENSIONS:

For the following questions, these offices and their web sites may be able to help you: your state's Department of Environmental Protection or Management, the Board of Health, the American Lung Association and its web site, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's web site or a regional office.

- What's the incidence of gasoline spills or leaks into freshwater aquifers?
- How do gasoline and oil runoff affect health or water treatment processes? What is done to protect our health from toxins in fuel and other automotive fluids?
- Is your county a "non-attainment" county for any pollutants, or does it meet the standards for clean air? Do other counties in your region or the counties downwind meet standards for clean air? Levels of which pollutants, if any, exceed clean air standards?
- What health problems exist in your region that might be attributed to air pollution? For example, are there high rates of asthma or other respiratory illnesses in your region?