**Directions: Answer the following questions in COMPLETE sentences.**

**Environmental justice issues in Los Angeles are impacting our health — that includes yours**

The Sundial

By Sarah Contreras

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Last month, one of the world’s largest producers and distributors of batteries, [Exide Technologies, began shutting down its recycling plant in Vernon](http://www.latimes.com/science/la-me-exide-cleanup-20150321-story.html%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) (*a city five miles south of downtown LA)*, leaving behind a decade’s worth of pollution and hazardous waste. Exide came to an agreement with federal officials in an effort to avoid criminal charges associated with the release of dangerous pollutants into surrounding southeast Los Angeles neighborhoods.

Poorly controlled environmental hazards such as those created by Exide, saturate *(soak or drench)* many low-income LA communities in what are called “toxic hotspots.”

Residents of these hot spots are at an increased risk of developing many health complications, such as asthma, heart and lung disease and other illnesses, according to the [American Lung Association](http://www.lung.org/associations/charters/mid-atlantic/air-quality/outdoor-air-quality.html%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank).

[Low-income minority neighborhoods](http://www.epa.gov/region9/ej/index.html%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) disproportionately (*unequally)* bear the burden of air pollution because of their close proximity *(nearness in distance)* to freeways and pollution-causing industries, as well as their lack of green space.

1. Why are low-income neighborhoods more exposed to air pollution?

The primary sources of air toxins are large chemical manufacturers, gas stations, automobile paint and body shops, print shops and dry cleaners. While all communities may face pollution, [low-income minority neighborhoods](http://www.epa.gov/region9/ej/index.html%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) are far more commonly devastated by environmental hazards.

An [article](http://articles.latimes.com/2011/jan/21/local/la-me-hazards-pacoima-20110121%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) published in the Los Angeles Times reported that 1.2 million LA residents live within two miles of facilities handling hazardous waste—91 percent of which are minorities.

Yet, it is not enough to simply consider the problem. In order to help our most vulnerable LA neighbors get out from under the disproportionate *(unequal)* burden of pollution, environmental justice must become an integral *(important)* part of our conversations and actions surrounding social inequity.

Jared Blumenfield, regional administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, [states](http://www.sej.org/headlines/profile-environmental-justice-comes-naturally-new-epa-region-9-administrator%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank),“The quality of your environment cannot be dependent on the color of your skin, the size of your bank account, whether you were born on tribal lands… Environmental justice cannot be an afterthought – it must be central to how we think and what we do so that we can offer meaningful assistance to communities that have been left behind.”

1. What are some of the primary sources of air toxins in Los Angeles?

Local efforts to provide meaningful assistance are already underway. In three of the aforementioned *(previously mentioned)* LA low-income toxic hot spots—Pacoima, Boyle Heights and Wilmington—a coalition *(alliance)* of grassroots organizations and community members have been actively advocating for an aggressive policy to reduce and prevent pollution, and improve public spaces. The Clean Up Green Up policy would designate these three areas as “green zone” districts, revitalizing *(give new life to)* industries and preventing further pollution. The policy would reward industries that become green with economic incentives, while targeting big polluters with harsher inspection and enforcement protocols.

1. What are some organizations in California promoting as ways to combat environmental justice?

Notes on Camden:

Notes on the Bronx:

1. Why do you think factories, landfills, and wastewater treatment plants are more commonly located in low income communities?

5) What role do you think the government should have to ensure that environmental justice occurs?