

COVID

&

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DISPARITIES

WA State Environmental Justice Taskforce

May 18, 2020

- ▶ A recent Harvard study suggests that poor air quality can increase COVID19 mortality, specifically, that, “a small increase in long-term exposure to PM2.5 leads to a large increase in COVID-19 death rate.

RACE, POLLUTION & COVID-19

- ▶ WA Department of Health reports that the ethnicity of 36% of confirmed cases (not just deaths) are completely unknown.
- ▶ Seattle-King County Department of Public Health reports that Hispanic, Black and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander groups have been infected and hospitalized at significantly higher rates in King County than white people
- ▶ Confirmed cases statewide show 31% of people with COVID-19 are Hispanic or Latino.
- ▶ The percentage of COVID-19 patients who are Black is also slightly above that population's overall percentage and so are people who are multi-racial.
- ▶ At this point in data collection, 48% of positive COVID-19 are identified as white, while making up 68% of the state population.

DISPARATE IMPACTS IN WA STATE

- ▶ To ensure that COVID relief/response funds and programs are effectively targeted to areas most impacted, should the Environmental Justice Task Force make a recommendation that COVID relief/response efforts prioritize and be focused on areas in the Environmental Health Disparity mapping that show high levels of disparities?

PROPOSAL: USING THE EHD IN COVID-19 RESPONSE