

Improve air quality for the most vulnerable

Using grants to incentivize air emission reductions will protect people who have been disproportionately harmed by pollution.

Challenge

Minnesota’s air quality is generally good, but pollution levels are not consistent throughout the state. People in some communities experience air pollution that is high enough to worsen health conditions, or are exposed to contaminants that aren’t subject to federal and state standards. Long-term exposure to some regulated pollutants, even at low levels, can be harmful to human health

Facilities that release air pollution may not have incentives to reduce their emissions if they are currently complying with federal and state standards. But reducing those emissions would help protect human health, particularly in Black, Indigenous, or low-income communities and communities of color, which are disproportionately affected by air pollution.



Proposal

Governor Walz is recommending a \$3.2 million in FY2024 and \$3.2 million in FY2025 from the General Fund for grants to regulated facilities in environmental justice areas of concern. The grant dollars would subsidize pollution control equipment or process improvements that reduce the facilities’ air emissions. The additional funds in FY2024 and subsequent years will support operating costs and two new FTEs at the MPCA to develop and implement the grant program.

Why it’s important

More than 1,100 of Minnesota’s industrial facilities with air emission permits are located in environmental justice areas of concern, where residents are disproportionately affected by pollution. People with lower incomes, communities of color, and members of tribal nations are exposed to higher levels of pollution due to past business decisions and discriminatory government policies that resulted in pollution-heavy industrial facilities

Air quality risk

These communities are more likely to be near higher levels of air pollution.



located in their neighborhoods. Encouraging industries with air emissions to go above and beyond what is required will reduce pollution and help address these inequities to improve health outcomes for all Minnesotans.

For more information

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