

## Integrating Epidemiology with Community Action for Environmental Justice

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### ABSTRACT

Most public health research addresses topics identified by industry and government institutions that create or permit hazardous production activities and fund studies. In contrast, workers and communities disproportionately affected by these activities have identified research questions related to their experiences, and they have challenged scientists to conduct studies to address their concerns. Exposure assessment and epidemiologic studies of industrial swine production in North Carolina provide examples of how public health researchers can respond to the research and educational needs of exposed populations. Community-driven research can

include creative analyses of existing data as well as other traditional approaches and community-based participatory research. Community-driven research should be based upon close relationships with affected communities in order to develop appropriate research questions and sampling plans, improve data quality, and enrich interpretation of analyses. Involvement of community-based organizations offers opportunities for researchers to contribute to grassroots action for public health and environmental justice.