

**Los Angeles County Department of Public Health  
Office of Environmental Justice and Climate Health**

Five-Year Strategic Plan Development Virtual Countywide Workshop  
Thursday, January 25, 2024, 5:00 - 6:30pm

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

STRATEGIC PLAN

**Q: Who are the County staff that will be leading this Office?**

A: Christine De Rosa is the interim Director of the Office of Environmental Justice and Climate Health (OEJCH). The OEJCH is within the Environmental Health Division in the LA County Department of Public Health (DPH). Recruitment for a permanent director is underway.

**Q: What are the different functions of the Chief Sustainability Office and OEJCH?**

A: The Strategic Plan process aims to provide greater clarity around the gaps and overlaps between the two offices.

**Q: Environmental Justice and Climate and Health is a big LA County Department of Public Health mandate, are there areas that you see as the most important environmental impacts, populations, or health outcomes that you think DPH should focus on?**

A: Many communities in the County are disproportionately affected by environmental pollution, frequently from multiple sources. These same communities also tend to be at heightened risk due to climate hazards. The strategic plan process will help us better understand community priorities across LA County so that we may improve health protections for those communities that are most impacted by and vulnerable to environmental and climate hazards. We encourage you to attend the workshops that will be held throughout the County in each Supervisorial District, as those will cover more District-specific content.

**Q: Did the Office get new positions or is it a re-organization of existing personnel?**

A: This is largely a re-organization of existing personnel, many of whom were part of the previous Toxicology & Environmental Assessment (TEA) Branch. Two new positions were requested for the Office, including the Director. In addition, some of the work that was previously performed in the TEA Branch has moved to a different branch within the LA County DPH Environmental Health Division, along with the related positions.

**Q: What are upcoming projects the office will be working on? What are the best ways to stay involved?**

A: The OEJCH frequently responds to environmental health events and works on projects as directed by the LA County Board of Supervisors, so upcoming projects are not always predictable. For example, there was a Board motion that passed recently about indoor maximum heat thresholds, and the OEJCH is engaged in this effort. Other initiatives are the Aliso Canyon Disaster Health Research Study, protection from oil and gas operations, and the Lead-Free Homes Los Angeles program.



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If you would like to stay informed of the strategic planning process, receive periodic updates, and/or announcements from our office send an email titled "Listserv" to [DPH-OEJCH@ph.lacounty.gov](mailto:DPH-OEJCH@ph.lacounty.gov) with your contact information.

**Q: What are the specific goals you have for this project?**

A: On April 5, 2022, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors passed a motion to establish the Office of Environmental Justice and Climate Health. The directive included the development of a five-year plan, shifting focus from response to prevention. The Board also highlighted the following key OEJCH functions: communication, community engagement, data, interagency coordination, and policy.

**Q: Will you define climate health issues DPH will address?**

A: Climate change poses a variety of hazards that can impact health, including hotter temperatures, declining air quality, wildfires, drought, flooding, and vector-borne disease. We anticipate that the strategic plan process will help the OEJCH prioritize climate health needs across LA County.

**Q: Will you email folks in attendance today that the draft Plan is available for review & comments?**

A: The draft strategic plan will be posted online for public comment. Communication will be sent to stakeholders and community countywide via email to encourage everyone to review and give input on the draft before it is finalized.

**Q: Is the office empowered to enforce any policies that it might forward for approval?**

A: The OEJCH does not have much enforcement authority as of now. The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health can enforce regulations that it has direct authority over, but the OEJCH doesn't have those authorities. OEJCH works with the agencies that have the authority to support enforcement.

**Q: What is the next step in this 5-year strategic planning process?**

A: Following this virtual workshop, and other workshops held across the County through Community Based Organization (CBO) partners, the 5-year strategic plan draft will be developed by this spring. It will then be released for public comment before a final draft is developed.

**Q: Will LA County Dept of Health Services have a role in this plan?**

A: The Department of Health Services (DHS) is a separate department from the Department of Public Health (DPH). DPH coordinates activities with DHS.



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**PARTNERSHIPS & OTHER JURISDICTIONS**

**Q: Will the City of Los Angeles be included in this work?**

A: The OEJCH has coordinated and collaborated with the City of Los Angeles, including with the Petroleum Administrator's Office, City Planning, and the City's Chief Heat Officer. OEJCH is also working on developing a stronger relationship with the City of Los Angeles Climate Emergency Mobilization Office (CEMO).

**Q: Are you planning to coordinate with the various small cities and municipalities as they manage and update their city strategic plans, local tasks and goals, and the local communications to residents?**

A: The OEJCH is interested and engaged in coordinating with municipalities around land use and other topics. This includes determining who has decision-making authority and ensuring that municipalities incorporate public health perspectives in decision-making and planning.

**Q: Presently, the city of Pomona is updating its zoning code. This hasn't been done in many decades, which is dangerous for communities. Shouldn't the county encourage and work with cities to keep their codes up to date?**

A: Zoning for unincorporated areas of LA County is under the jurisdiction of the LA County Department of Regional Planning, and not the LA County DPH. In addition, the city of Pomona is incorporated, and is thus responsible for its own jurisdiction. However, the OEJCH recognizes the importance of coordinating with the LA County Department of Regional Planning to integrate a public health and environmental justice perspective.

**SPECIFIC ISSUES IN THE COMMUNITY**

**Q: What are you doing to stop the hazardous waste disposal facility Quemetco from expanding and becoming a hazardous waste incinerator to dispose of plastic and rubber battery casings by burning them in proximity to homes, businesses, and schools?**

Comment from participant: Consider working with the regulatory agencies to build additional battery recycling facilities away from highly populated areas to shift the burden away from the currently adversely impacted communities surrounding Quemetco. Then work to clean up the hazardous waste levels of lead, arsenic, etc. that are documented in the soils in the community and are contaminating the surface and groundwater.



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A: The OEJCH will continue to work with regulatory agencies and County partners to ensure the operator takes the necessary precautions to protect health. For the latest information, click the link <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/eh/quemetco/index.htm>

**Q: What type of policies will your organization be involved with to minimize microplastics in our environment?**

A: At this time the Office of Environmental Justice and Climate Health doesn't have a concrete policy agenda. We are expecting direction on policy development from the strategic planning process.

**Q: Are we doing anything about homelessness as it is a major environmental health issue in Los Angeles?**

A: Thus far addressing homelessness has not been in the scope of the OEJCH. Our sister program within Environmental Health, the Community Protection Branch, is doing some work around the inspection of shelters and linking the homeless with resources.

**Q: I have concerns about old and abandoned oil wells leaking methane. What is the vision and goals for that and how can the county enforce with opposition from the petroleum industry?**

A: The LA County [Office of Oil and Gas](#) is the county entity that oversees oil and gas development in unincorporated LA County. The departments that participate as part of the Office of Oil and Gas include Public Works, Regional Planning, Fire Health Hazardous Materials Division, Public Health, and the Chief Sustainability Office. The Office represents Public Health on oil and gas matters and collaborates with the other departments to align ordinance revisions, contracting processes, and enforcement activities to maximize health and safety protections for nearby communities. To report concerns about oil and gas wells, click on "Submit Issue" on the Office of Oil and Gas webpage.

**Q: Can the OEJCH do anything about vehicle pollution? Has the office looked at hooding, and cleaning the air above all the county freeways?**

A: Currently, the Office of Environmental Justice and Climate Health is involved with the California Air Resources Board (CARB) AB617 initiative to reduce air pollution from vehicles and other mobile sources. For more information about CARB's initiative please click [here](#).

**Q: Who is our liaison at City of Lancaster SPA 1? Is this the same office of Environmental Health?**



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A: The Office of Environmental Justice and Climate Health is a different program from the Community Field Services office in Service Planning Area 1 (SPA 1), although both programs are part of Public Health. You can learn more about SPA 1 at the following webpage: <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/chs/SPA1/index.htm>.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

**Q: Will there be upcoming funding support for community-based organizations to do outreach & engagement?**

A: At this time, there is no dedicated funding to pay Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to do any kind of community engagement, but the OEJCH does engage the community through several avenues. We are partnering with CBOs for engagement for this strategic plan. Additionally, there are 2 staff in the Office of Environmental Justice and Climate Health (OEJCH) who currently oversee community engagement. The OEJCH also works with Community Field Services/the SPAs, which have community public health workers. Community Public Health Workers do extensive community engagement in their respective SPAs.

HEALTH CODE

**Q: How long does it take to make changes to the health codes?**

A: Changing health codes is a lengthy and complex process. The Office of Environmental Justice and Climate Health usually works on health code changes when directed by the Board of Supervisors.

**Q: Will this office make recommendations on health code changes/updates? It's tough to see a lot of "policies" written but none is added to the health code or building code (i.e., air filtration for residences near freeways).**

A: When the LA County Board of Supervisors wants to make a change to the health code, the OEJCH is sometimes directed to work on these changes. In addition, the OEJCH is occasionally asked to review language and make recommendations about ordinance updates. For example, it weighed in on the oil and gas ordinances in the County and City, and worked with the communities to provide recommendations.

COMMENTS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- Typically, cities hire consultants to help them develop, revise, and update their plans. Perhaps educating land use consultants on this environmental justice/climate health work would assist cities through consultant recommendations.



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- I participated in the preparation of the sustainability plan. It is important to make sure communities have access to the plan.
- Warehouses are consuming our community.
- The quality of air and soil in the Antelope Valley is extremely poor...even worse than Metro Los Angeles.

