



# EPA blasted over lack of protection of minorities



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The federal government's Civil Rights Commission is castigating the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), saying it is failing to protect minorities from pollution.

The commission, an independent body, said the EPA has failed to respond to numerous complaints concerning "environmental justice," citing cases like a company's decision to move toxic coal ash to a majority-black community in Alabama. The EPA took no action in that case.

"I'm not certain if the Environmental Protection Agency is incompetent or indifferent when it comes to requiring environmental justice from polluters of minority communities, but whatever the case, the result is the same," commission Chairman Marty Castro wrote in the 230-page **report** released Friday.

"The EPA has failed miserably in its mandate to protect communities of color from environmental hazards."

The 1964 Civil Rights Act and a 1994 presidential order require that the EPA take action to prevent or mitigate environmental hazards that present a particular risk to minorities.

The commission found through its investigation of the EPA that its civil rights office has never made a formal finding of discrimination, nor has it withdrawn funding from a company or group due to discrimination.

It found, overall, that poor and minority communities frequently bear the brunt of pollution because waste facilities are placed in or near their homes, and the EPA has done little to stop it.

The EPA defended itself and said the commission did not properly recognize the work it has done in environmental justice.

"EPA has a robust and successful national program to protect minority and low-income communities from pollution. This work, coordinated across our federal, state and tribal partners, has achieved strong results in reducing exposure to serious health threats that overburdened communities face," Mustafa Ali, a senior adviser to EPA head **Gina McCarthy**, said in a statement.

"There are still important challenges to address, so we developed our [Environmental Justice] 2020 action agenda to build on successful strategies to expand the scope and impact of our work in these communities," he said. "Despite conveying this progress to the Commission previously, it is largely absent in their report."

**TAGS: Gina McCarthy, Environmental Protection Agency, civil rights, Commission on Civil Rights**