

Environmental Health Assessment Guide For A Community

Windshield Survey Guide

A windshield survey involves driving (or walking) around a community and making pertinent observations concerning possible public health concerns. It involves three steps from the nursing process: planning, implementation, and evaluation.

1. *Planning: Define Your Route*

To prepare for doing your windshield survey, you need a local map. For an environmental health oriented survey, you will want to circle or highlight the following on the map:

- bodies of water, including reservoirs
- parks and other recreational areas, including golf courses
- schools, hospitals
- landfills or other waste disposal areas
- industries or utilities noted on the map

Also try to identify the industrial, commercial or agricultural hub of the community, as well as the residential areas.

Using your map, decide upon a route that will take you past all of the sites that you have marked. Mark your route with a highlighter.

2. *Implementation: Perform the Survey*

As you drive your route, look for possible environmental health hazards. You should have questions such as the following in mind:

- What are the industries and where are they located?
- What smokestacks do you see in the community? What is the nature of the facility utilizing them? Write down the facility name.
- What land uses surround commercial, industrial or agricultural sites?
- What roads pass through and around this community? 2-lane roads? Highways? Is there a problem with traffic congestion?
- Are recreational areas located in the midst of residential areas? What is the nature of the recreational area? Does it appear likely that substances such as pesticides are used for maintenance? (Golf courses are major users of fertilizer and pesticides.)
- What land uses surround schools and residential areas?
- What are the uses of land adjoining bodies of water? Is there a buffer of trees along the waterway? Does the water appear clear, or is it cloudy or

overgrown with algae? Is there a possibility of industrial discharge? Is there a possibility of fertilizer or pesticide runoff from agricultural activities or recreational or residential areas? Write down the names of adjoining corporate or municipal property owners.

3. *Evaluation: Summarize and Research Your Findings*

After you have completed your windshield survey, you may want to go back to the electronic resources noted in the Project Guidelines (page 3) to get more information about substances being discharged by specific facilities. *After consultation with your professor*, you may wish to contact facility managers for more information.

See the *Community Environmental Health Assessment Resource* at www.envirn.umaryland.edu (→ assessment → community) for further information to help you determine possible environmental health hazards related to your windshield survey findings.

This material was developed at the Environmental Health Education Center of the University of Maryland School of Nursing. For more information, see envirn.umaryland.edu.

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