Protect Our Health

Protecting our health means looking beyond the walls of a data center. From the air we breathe to the water we drink and the environment we live in, these facilities can have far-reaching effects on the communities around them. Potential health concerns include:

Water Quality and Chemical Use

Modern data centers can require millions of gallons of water to cool their servers, placing significant demands on local water supplies. In some communities, residents have reported declining well levels, reduced water pressure, or changes in water quality after large industrial water users moved into the area. While every community is different, these concerns deserve careful consideration before additional facilities are approved.

Many data centers rely on closed-loop cooling systems to reduce overall water consumption. Although these systems reuse water, they still require chemical treatments to prevent corrosion, scaling, and biological growth. Over time, the cooling water must be replaced, creating questions about how chemically treated water is handled, disposed of, or discharged.

Communities deserve transparency about the chemicals used in these systems, how wastewater is managed, and whether any contaminants could affect local water resources. If forever chemicals (PFAS) or other persistent compounds are used anywhere in the cooling process or related infrastructure, residents should know how they will be safely managed and prevented from entering the environment. Clean, reliable water is essential for every community.

Air Quality

Many large data centers rely on diesel backup generators that can release fine particulate matter and other pollutants during testing or power outages. Construction activity can also increase dust and emissions in surrounding communities.

Poor air quality has been linked to respiratory problems, cardiovascular disease, and other health concerns, especially for children, older adults, and those with asthma or other underlying conditions. Communities deserve to understand how a new data center could affect the air they breathe before construction begins.

Data centers are known to create “heat islands,” increasing the local temperatures from 3 to 16 degrees Fahrenheit. When communities experience heat waves and data centers make it even hotter, residents suffer by needing more electricity to cool off, needing to stay indoors, and possibly even lower air quality if the data center is given a pollution exemption for its back up generators.

Noise Pollution

Industrial cooling systems, ventilation equipment, and generators can produce continuous low-frequency noise. Over time, excessive noise has been associated with sleep disruption, increased stress, and reduced quality of life for nearby residents. It can also disrupt wildlife by interfering with communication, breeding, feeding, and habitat use, affecting the health of the broader ecosystem that communities depend on.

As AI data centers become much larger and place greater demands on the grid, some projects are proposing or receiving permits to run on-site generation much more frequently. In some cases, generators or other fossil-fuel power sources are being used during periods of grid stress or as part of the facility's normal operating strategy, not just during emergencies.