

Communities affected by environmental contamination often see long reports full of data. Take time to understand these reports, it can save you time and money. Industry officials, decision-makers, and the community will take you more seriously if you show you understand the numbers and terms.



People were surprised – as soon as the stuff was on the wall, we could puzzle out the bigger story together.

Slowing down lets the group figure some things out themselves. It also helps them decide what they want to ask an expert about.

Start with a first look...

SA A First Look at Technical Documents

Look carefully at a document like

- a report of environmental test results
- an environmental impact statement
- a permit document.

See what you can figure out as a group. Then, list and prioritize the questions you still have.

...then practice giving the data meaning.

SA Converting Between Units: Practice converting ppm or ppb to mg/kg and µg/kg or mg/L and µg/L.

SA Mapping Data: Put data onto a map to see hot spots.

SA Compare to Standards: Compare test results to health-based standards to find the worst contamination.

If you get stuck on a definition, review a fact sheet.

SA Common Units: Fact sheets (with optional activities) for common units in environmental testing.

- Order of magnitude
- Metric prefixes (kilo-, milli-, micro-)
- Cubic meters (m³)
- Liters, milliliters, deciliters (L, mL, dL)
- Kilograms, grams, milligrams, and micrograms (kg, g, mg, µg)
- Acres and Hectares
- Tons and Tonnes
- Watts (W) and more
- Parts per million and billion (ppb, ppb)

SA Limits and Levels: Fact sheets about common limits and levels in environmental testing:

- Detection Limits and Reporting Limits
- Background Levels
- Reference Dose (RfD)
- Cancer Slope Factor and Unit Risk Factor
- Reference Concentration (RfC) for Inhalation
- Water quality standards
- Soil quality standards
- Air quality standards
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration Permissible Exposure Limits (OSHA PELs)