

Tips for Interpreting Soil Analyses

- The results of a soil analysis will tell you the concentration of a substance in your soil. To know if that amount exceeds a level considered safe for human health, you must compare your results to a screening level for the contaminant.
- **Not one standard as to what constitutes safe levels.**
 - Two commonly used screening levels are the OEHHA **California Human Health Screening Level (CHHSL)** and the **US EPA Soil Screening Levels (SSLs)** for residential use.
 - These standards are advisory! So, before starting a project, check with your city, county, or school district that might have another standard.
 - These standards are developed to protect **human health** and don't address ecological impacts.

California Human Health Screening Level (CHHSL)

https://oehha.ca.gov/media/downloads/risk-assessment/california-human-health-screening-levels-chhsls/chhslstableall_0.pdf

US EPA Soil Screening Levels (SSLs) - Summary Table

<https://www.epa.gov/risk/regional-screening-levels-rsls-generic-tables-june-2017>

- IF you are testing a substance not included in the CHHSL or US EPA SSL tables, or if you are interested in **environmental** risk and associated screening levels, the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board website is helpful: https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sanfranciscobay/water_issues/programs/esl.html

It includes an interactive Excel workbook to compare soil test results to multiple health and environmental standards.

- Note your units: mg/kg = ppm. If results are given in mg/kg dry soil, make sure the screening level you are comparing to is also for dry soil.
- Don't do unnecessary work: soil lab may provide a narrative report with recommendations.
- You can often call the lab and ask them questions if you don't understand a result.