

Coal Impacts: Field Documentation Guide & Log

Purpose

This guide helps community members **observe, document, and record** environmental and health impacts caused by coal mining, longwall operations, coal waste disposal, or coal-fired power plants. Accurate documentation strengthens complaints, enforcement requests, public comments, and advocacy efforts.

Section 1: General Guidelines for Documentation

- **Be consistent:** Record information as close to real-time as possible.
 - **Be specific:** Include dates, times, locations, and descriptions of the impact.
 - **Use multiple forms of evidence:** Photos, videos, water tests, sketches, audio recordings.
 - **Prioritize safety:** Do not enter dangerous areas or put yourself at risk.
 - **Respect privacy and property:** Avoid trespassing; note observations from public spaces or your own property.
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Section 2: What to Document

1. Water Impacts

- Stream, creek, or river discoloration (orange, black, cloudy water)
- Unusual odors (sulfur, chemical)
- Changes in flow or dry water sources
- Domestic wells or springs affected
- Health impacts related to water quality (skin irritation, nausea)

2. Land Impacts

- Subsidence, cracks in foundations or structures
- Sinkholes or ground depressions
- Vegetation loss or tree damage
- Erosion or landslides

3. Air Impacts

- Dust plumes from blasting or mining activity
- Visible smoke or particulate emissions
- Odors or chemical smells

4. Noise and Blasting

- Date, time, and duration of blasts
- Vibration intensity and distance from property
- Structural damage or community disturbance

5. Health Impacts

- Respiratory issues, headaches, or other symptoms in residents
- Livestock or pets affected
- Duration and frequency of symptoms

Section 3: Field Log Template

Date	Time	Location	Observation Type	Description of Impact	Photo/Video Taken?	Witnesses	Additional Notes
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Tips for Using the Log:

- Take multiple photos from different angles.
 - Number or label photos/videos to match log entries.
 - Include GPS coordinates if possible.
 - Record changes over time to show patterns or recurring problems.
 - Encourage neighbors to contribute logs for a stronger collective record.
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Section 4: Optional Tracking Sections

- **Water Quality Tests:** pH, conductivity, turbidity, presence of contaminants.
 - **Weather Conditions:** Rain, wind, temperature, which can affect impacts.
 - **Permitting or Agency Interactions:** Document complaints filed, agency responses, inspection dates, and enforcement actions.
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Section 5: Tips for Effective Documentation

1. **Keep your records organized:** Use binders, notebooks, or digital folders.
2. **Date everything:** Even photos and videos should have timestamps.
3. **Correlate observations with mining activity:** Note nearby operations, blasting schedules, or mine panel activity.
4. **Use multiple sources:** Include observations from multiple households for corroboration.
5. **Back up your data:** Store digital files securely, with copies in different locations.