



Date: January 5, 2010

General questions: Christine Decker Stone, public information officer, 971 673-1282, desk; 503 602-8027, cell;
Christine.L.Stone@state.or.us

Technical questions: Brett Sherry, Radon Coordinator, 971 673-0442;
Brett.W.Sherry@state.or.us

All Oregonians urged to test their homes for radon, a leading cause of lung cancer

Radon is odorless, tasteless and invisible – and it could be in your home in dangerous levels.

As part of National Radon Action Month, all Oregonians are urged to test their homes for radon, one of the leading causes of lung cancer in the United States.

“Because you can’t see or smell radon, people tend to downplay the health effects and ignore the possibility that there might be a silent killer in their homes,” says Radon Coordinator Brett Sherry, Oregon Public Health Division.

Radon is a naturally occurring gas seeping out of the ground. It is dispersed in the outdoor air, but it can build up to dangerous levels when trapped in buildings. Scientists have long been concerned about the health risk of radon, but never before has there been such overwhelming proof that exposure to elevated levels of radon cause lung cancer in humans.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that radon is responsible for more than 20,000 lung cancer deaths per year. Radon is

the second leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S. after smoking and the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers.

Testing homes for elevated levels of radon is simple and inexpensive. Radon test kits can be purchased at local hardware and home improvement stores or directly from radon testing companies. Many kits are priced at about \$20. Radon problems can be fixed by qualified contractors for a cost similar to that of many common home repairs such as painting or having a new water heater installed, anywhere from \$800 to about \$2,500. Results of the tests are then sent to the Oregon Public Health Radon Program by the testing companies by zip code, but does not include exact addresses or homeowner names. However, anyone needing more information after testing their home can contact the Radon Program.

Radon levels vary throughout Oregon depending on the underlying geology. For radon levels in your neighborhood visit the Oregon Public Health Radon Program Web site to look up radon test results by county or zip code.

“The take home point is that all homes should be tested for radon, regardless what zip code you are in or what your neighbors' test results were. You simply won't know if your home has a radon problem unless you test it,” Sherry says.

The Oregon Public Health Radon Program is working with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in a nationwide campaign to educate Americans about the dangers of radon exposure. For more information on radon, radon testing and mitigation, and radon resistant new construction, please call Oregon Public Health Radon Program at 971-673-0490 or visit www.healthoregon.org/radon or visit the EPA's Web site at www.epa.gov/radon/nram.

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Oregon Public Health Division Mission: To protect and promote the health of all the people of Oregon.