

U.S. Congressman
Nick Rahall
WORKING FOR WEST VIRGINIANS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OCTOBER 24, 1990

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RADON ABOVE 60% PERCENT IN SOME HOMES IN WEST VIRGINIA

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- In a growing effort to make the public aware of the effects of radon gas, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall are working together towards alerting southern West Virginia about the effects of this cancer causing element.

The following information is provided as a guide to help you in the detection and elimination of radon gas:

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas. You cannot see, smell or taste it. Radon can seep into your home, apartment or business through dirt floors, drains, slab joints, block walls and cracks in foundation.

Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer. The EPA and the Surgeon General strongly recommend that all dwellings be tested and if a problem exists, corrective action be taken. Radon test kits can be purchased at some hardware and department stores for approximately \$15-\$20 and mitigation work can be done for approximately \$700-\$2,000.

For your information, enclosed is a district-wide map that outlines the radon levels throughout the 4th district.

-MORE-

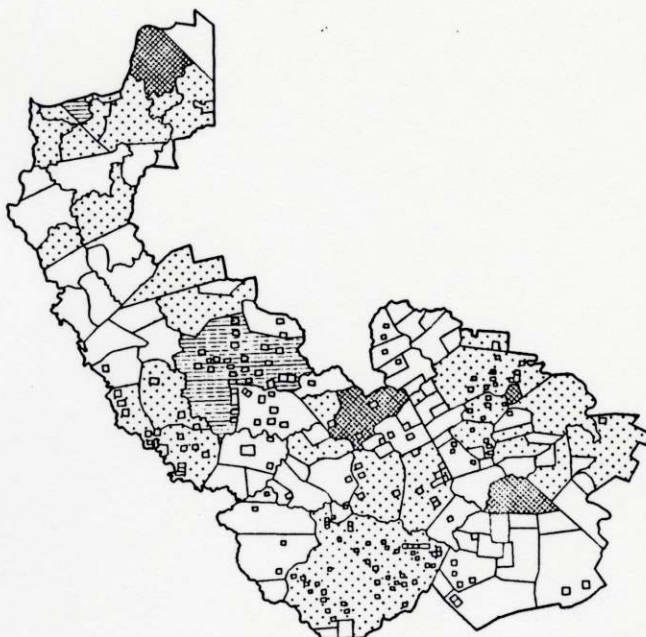
PERCENTAGE OF RADON READINGS ABOVE 4 pCi/l
WEST VIRGINIA CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 4
REPRESENTATIVE NICK JOE RAHALL II

PERCENTAGE OF RADON READINGS
ABOVE 4 pCi/l

- Over 60%
- 40% to 60%
- 20% to 40%
- 0% to 20%

□ Insufficient Data

Data: Radon data from Key Technology,
Teledyne, AirCheck Inc. and The
Radon Project.
Projection: UTM Zone 18
Plotted: August 1990
Produced By: EPA Region III - Philadelphia
Information Resources Management
Branch
Produced For: EPA Region III - Philadelphia
Air Programs Branch



INFORMATION ON: RADON

WHAT IS RADON? Radon is a colorless, odorless, radioactive gas found in low concentrations everywhere on earth. Radon is formed from the natural decay of radium, a decay product of uranium. Radon is usually measured in "picocuries per liter" (pCi/l). Because it is a gas, it can enter buildings through cracks or holes in foundations and basement floors. EPA recommends that houses with radon above 4 pCi/l should be fixed.

HOW DOES RADON AFFECT HEALTH? Because it is radioactive, radon continues to decay into other materials called "radon decay products." When inhaled, these decay products expose the lungs to radiation which increases the risk of lung cancer. The more radon you are exposed to, the greater your risk of developing lung cancer. EPA estimates that 20,000 lung cancer deaths a year in the United States are caused by radon.

WHAT CAN HOMEOWNERS DO TO

FIND OUT IF THEY HAVE A PROBLEM? Since radon levels vary from house to house, the only way to know if you have a radon problem is to test for it. Homeowners should purchase a radon test kit. These kits are an inexpensive and easy way to find out if there are elevated radon levels. These test kits are generally available at hardware and chain stores for a nominal price. The results of radon test are usually good enough to determine if a radon problem exists. If the homeowner desires more precise test results, they may hire a firm specializing in radon testing. Lists of competent firms and reliable detectors are available from state radon offices.

WHAT INFORMATION IS

AVAILABLE FOR CONCERNED HOMEOWNERS? Citizens with inquiries on radon in West Virginia should contact:

West Virginia Office of Environmental Health Services
Bureau of Health Protection
Capitol Complex Bldg. 3
Charleston, WV 25305

West Virginia's toll free Radon Information Hot Line is 1-800-922-1255 and EPA, Region III's radon information number is 215-597-8320.



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

Region III

841 Chestnut Building

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107

SEP 26 1990

Honorable Nick Rahall, II
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Rahall:

We are writing to solicit your support in encouraging West Virginia homeowners to test for radon, a naturally occurring radioactive gas which is colorless, odorless and only detected through special testing. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Surgeon General have determined that indoor radon is a serious threat to public health and could be the second leading cause of lung cancer. Lifetime exposure to an average radon level of 4 picocuries per liter (pCi/l) may cause two (2) people in a community of 100 exposed to that level to die from lung cancer.

Based on this risk, EPA has advised that all homes should be tested for radon and that houses with radon levels above 4 pCi/l should undergo mitigation measures. About 12 percent of homes nationwide have annual average radon concentrations greater than 4 pCi/l.

We have compiled our radon screening data according to postal zip code. The enclosed maps and data illustrate that there is a radon problem in your District. The enclosed map of West Virginia Congressional District number 4 shows the percent of indoor radon readings above 4 pCi/l in each zip code.

In your District, there are some zip codes with 40-60 percent of the readings above 4 pCi/l. There are also some zip codes where 0-20 percent of the readings were above 4 pCi/l. In any home, the only way to determine the radon level is to test that home. We are therefore seeking your assistance in encouraging your constituents to test their homes for radon. Although no Federal grant funds are available for radon testing or remediation, most radon problems can be reduced to 4 pCi/l at a cost of \$700 to \$2,000. Radon tests cost about \$20 each.

We have found that the greatest roadblock in reducing the risk of radon is public apathy. We could use your help in overcoming this apathy. Enclosed you will find a flyer which was tested as a utility bill insert and found to be effective. The flyer and maps could be sent as a part of your regular mailings.

We have also included a short paragraph which you could include in your regular newsletter to your constituents. We are enclosing pocket folders so that this material on radon can easily be included in the Environmental Information binder that we recently mailed to your office. We also would be happy to work with your office, at your request, if you would like to address the radon issue at a town meeting or any other public forum. Letters similar to this are being mailed to Senators Byrd and Rockefeller and other members of the West Virginia Congressional Delegation. We are available to brief you or your staff should you wish any additional information.

Thank you very much for your interest in this public health concern. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,



Edwin B. Erickson
Regional Administrator

Enclosures

cc: Taunja Willis Miller, Secretary
Department of Health and
Human Resources

Suggested Paragraph for Constituent Mailing

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas. You can't see, smell or taste it. Radon can seep into your home, apartment or business through dirt floors, drains, slab joints, block walls and cracks in foundation. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Surgeon General strongly recommend that all dwellings be tested and if a problem exists, corrective action be taken. Radon test kits can be purchased at some hardware and department stores for approximately \$15-\$20 and mitigation work can be done for approximately \$700-2,000. If you want additional information, please contact West Virginia Bureau of Health Protection at (304) 348-3526 or 1-800-922-1255 or the U.S. EPA at (215) 597-9009.

WHAT IS RADON?

Radon is a radioactive gas. You can't see, smell, or taste it. Radon occurs naturally in all soils. In outdoor air, radon gas is diluted to low levels. When radon gas seeps into homes, it can build up to potentially dangerous levels.

IS RADON A HEALTH HAZARD?

Yes. Scientists estimate that 5,000 to 20,000 lung cancer deaths a year in the United States may be caused by radon gas. This would make radon the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States.

Radon is one part of a long chain of radioactive decay. As radon decays, its byproducts may get trapped in your lungs and release

radiation. There is scientific evidence that this radiation can damage lung tissue.

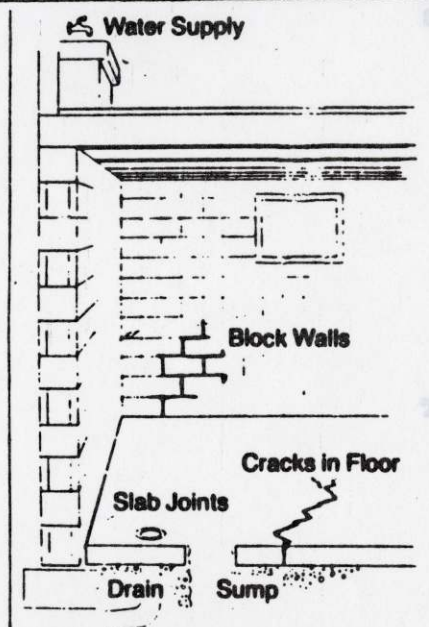
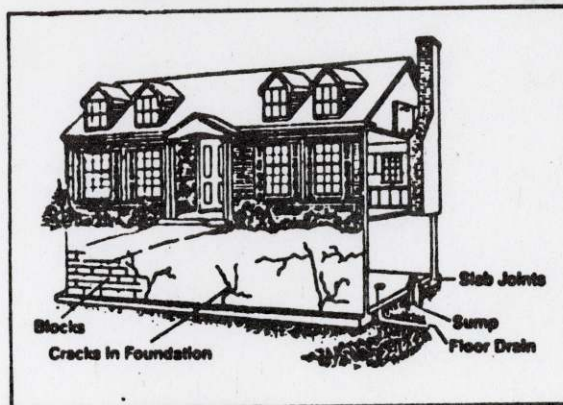
This lung tissue damage can eventually lead to lung cancer. The higher your radon level, and the longer you are exposed to it, the greater your risk.



HOW DOES RADON ENTER MY HOME?

Radon can enter your home through cracks in your home's foundation, dirt floors, pores in block walls, floor drains, and sumps. While radon usually enters through the basement or lower floors, it also circulates throughout your entire house.

Common Radon Entry Points



Radon levels can vary a lot even in the same neighborhood. Mostly, radon levels depend on how easy it is for the radon to get into your home and the amount of radon in the ground under your home.

HOW DO I TEST MY HOME?

Because you can't see radon, you must use a radon detector to measure the levels in your home. It is a simple do-it-yourself home test that comes with easy-to-follow instructions. When the test is completed, you send the detector back to the testing company, which analyzes it and sends you your results.

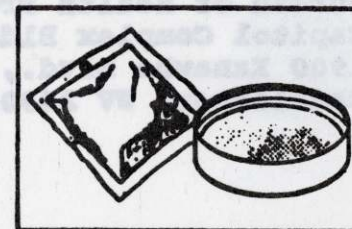
The two most common types of radon detectors are the charcoal detector and the alpha track detector.

Charcoal detectors cost as little as \$12 each and the alpha track detectors begin around \$25 each. These prices include the test itself and also the test results which will be sent to you.

Charcoal Detector

Recommended Test Period:
2 to 7 days

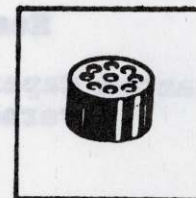
Approximate Cost: \$12 to \$25.



Alpha Track Detector

Recommended Test Period:
3 to 12 months

Approximate Cost: \$25 to \$50.



Either type of test can be used to measure radon levels in your home. The shorter test can provide useful screening information. Generally, however, the longer the test period, the more accurate the reading.