

SAFETY NEWSLETTER

SELF INSURED WORKER'S COMPENSATION FUND MEMBERS

January 2020

Radon Action Month in January

- ❖ Radon is a cancer-causing, radioactive gas. It is colorless, odorless, tasteless, and chemically inert.
- ❖ Radon is formed by the natural radioactive decay of uranium in rock, soil, and water. Naturally existing, low levels of uranium occur widely in Earth's crust; it can be found in all 50 states. Once radon is produced, it moves up through the ground into the air and can also dissolve into ground and surface water.
- ❖ Radon is estimated to cause thousands of deaths each year. That's because when you breathe air containing radon, you can get lung cancer. Surgeon General has warned that radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States today. Only smoking causes more lung cancer deaths.
- ❖ Nearly one out of every 15 homes has a radon level EPA considers to be elevated 4 pCi/L or greater. The U.S. average radon-in-air level in single family homes is 1.3 pCi/L. Indoor radon levels are very important because of the percentage of time we spend indoors.
- ❖ The only way to determine how much radon is in the area is to test for it. The EPA states that any radon exposure carries some risk; no level of radon exposure is always safe. However, EPA recommends homes be fixed if an occupant's long-term exposure will average 4 picocuries per liter (pCi/L) or higher.

- ❖ EPA estimates nearly 20,000 people die each year with lung cancer related to radon. The risk of lung cancer due to radon increases tremendously if you smoke.

Radon Risk If You Smoke

- ❖ Radon Level: If 1,000 people who smoked were exposed to this level over a lifetime...
- ❖ 20 pCi/L: About 260 people could get lung cancer
- ❖ 10 pCi/L: About 150 people could get lung cancer
- ❖ 8 pCi/L: About 120 people could get lung cancer
- ❖ 4 pCi/L: About 62 people could get lung cancer
- ❖ 2 pCi/L: About 32 people could get lung cancer
- ❖ 1.3 pCi/L: About 20 people could get lung cancer
- ❖ 0.4 pCi/L: About 3 people could get lung cancer

Radon Risk If You've Never Smoked

- ❖ Radon Level: If 1,000 people who never smoked were exposed to this level over a lifetime...
- ❖ 20 pCi/L: About 36 people could get lung cancer
- ❖ 10 pCi/L: About 18 people could get lung cancer
- ❖ 8 pCi/L: About 15 people could get lung cancer
- ❖ 4 pCi/L: About 7 people could get lung cancer
- ❖ 2 pCi/L: About 4 person could get lung cancer
- ❖ 1.3 pCi/L: About 2 people could get lung cancer
- ❖ 0.4 pCi/L: No Reported Risk

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- Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ): Radon Program provides a toll-free radon hotline (800-RADON GAS/800-723-6642). You can get information on radon health risks, testing, how to interpret results, and how to reduce elevated radon levels.
- Did you know that one in every four Michigan homes is expected to have radon levels that exceed the recommended federal action level? This matters because radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer, behind smoking. You can't see, smell or taste radon. The only way to know if you have elevated radon levels is to test.
- Protect yourself. Get Your Radon Test Kit or contact us for more information at 800-723-6642 (800-RADONGAS)!
- Testing is recommended every two years because homes settle, new cracks form in the foundation and radon levels can change. If test results show radon levels at or above 4 pCi/L, the USEPA recommends installing a radon mitigation system. This system grabs the radon before it ever enters the home and vents it outside.

Frequently Asked Question about Radon:

Where does it come from?

- Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that is tasteless, odorless, and colorless. It comes from the radioactive decay (breakdown) of radium, which comes from the radioactive decay of uranium, both of which are found in at least trace amounts in almost any kind of soil or rock. Granites, shales, phosphates, and certain other types of rock have higher than average concentrations of uranium, and as such, may produce higher concentrations of radon. However, elevated radon levels can occur even in areas with low concentrations of uranium in the soil or rocks.

What is a picocurie?

- A picocurie is a unit of measure for radiation. A curie (named after French physicist Marie Curie) is a way of measuring radioactive decay or disintegration, and it equals 3.7 x 10¹⁰ disintegrations per second. "Pico" means "trillionth," so a picocurie is a trillionth of a curie, or one-trillionth of 37 billion disintegrations per second. To put this in perspective, a house having 4 picocuries of radon per liter of air (4 pCi/l) has about 8 or 9 atoms of radon decaying every minute in every liter of air inside the house. A 1,000 square foot house with 4 pCi/l of radon has nearly 2 million atoms decaying in it every minute.

Is radon really a health risk? I've heard it is a scam!

- Yes, radon is a Class A carcinogen, which means it is known to cause cancer in humans. It is the second leading cause of lung cancer after smoking, and results in approximately 21,000 lung cancer deaths in the United States each year. Not everyone who breathes radon will develop lung cancer. Your risk is determined by such things as how much radon is in your home (and/or workplace, school, or other indoor environment); the amount of time you spend in your home (and/or workplace, school, or other indoor environment); and whether you smoke or have ever smoked. The longer you are exposed, and the higher the radon level, the greater the risk.

My neighbor tested and didn't find a radon problem. Do I still need to test?

- Yes! Radon levels can vary significantly from home to home or land parcel to land parcel. The only way to know whether YOUR home has a radon problem is to test YOUR home.