



President's Cancer Panel Targets Radon Risk

Following a comprehensive assessment of environmental cancer risks, the President's Cancer Panel released a report on Thursday, May 7, *Reducing Environmental Cancer Risks: What We Can Do Now*, calling for new personal and policy action to reduce the risk due to radon exposures in homes, daycare facilities, schools, and workplaces.

Radon is a radioactive gas that accumulates indoors and is the leading cause of lung cancer among never smokers. The National Academy of Sciences estimates that 22,000 people die each from radon exposure in their homes. In the United States, radon concentrations are measured in units known as picocuries per liter (pCi/L). Although no exposure to radon is considered safe, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has set a level of 4 pCi/L as a level where radon reduction is clearly needed.

"The President's Panel's report is an incredibly important reminder that each of us and our elected officials must do much better to reduce the terrible risk of indoor radon exposure," according to William Angell, President of the American Association of Radon Scientists and Technologists. Angell adds the report reinforces the World Health Organization's (WHO) new radon recommendations for lower radon concentrations at which people should take action to reduce exposure.

The President's Cancer Panel calls on EPA to evaluate reducing the Agency's 4 pCi/L Threshold for Action. In late 2009, WHO called for countries to set action level at 2.7 pCi/L as well as to improve rates of radon testing and radon reduction.

The Panel urges families to periodically tested their homes for radon since concentrations can change over time. Further, all home buyers are advised to test for radon in any home they may consider purchasing.

The report calls on Congress to support improved radon testing methods and provide tax deductions to encourage radon mitigation of existing homes. Senator Amy Klobuchar (MN) announced on April 30 a bill she is introducing that implements many of the President's Cancer Panel's recommendations.

State and local governments were called to implement building codes to require radon control in new construction and to regularly test all schools, day care centers, and workplaces.

The National Cancer Institute report, *Reducing Environmental Cancer Risks: What We Can Do Now* is available at http://deainfo.nci.nih.gov/advisory/pcp/pcp08-09rpt/PCP_Report_08-09_508.pdf