



PRESS RELEASE

Lung cancer deaths from radon gas in Canadian homes and buildings

Toronto, August 23, 2012 -- Recent media reports (*National Post*, *CBC*) have highlighted results from research conducted by Health Canada scientists on the prevalence of radon gas in Canadian homes and buildings.

Radon is an invisible, odourless, radioactive gas that seeps into homes, schools and other buildings through openings in foundation walls and basement floors. The only known health effect from prolonged exposure to radon is lung cancer.

On the basis of radon tests in some 14,000 homes and buildings across Canada, Health Canada scientists have found that many more homes than expected from previous surveys have radon levels above Canadian public health guidelines.

Having analyzed the test findings, Health Canada scientists have concluded that about 7% of homes and buildings across Canada have high radon gas levels. They have also concluded that approximately 16% of all lung cancer deaths in Canada can be attributed to radon in homes and buildings, irrespective of lung cancers from smoking. These estimates are higher than previous Health Canada estimates.

To the independent Radiation Safety Institute of Canada, which has argued for many years for better public health and workplace protection from radon, these numbers are not surprising. Other countries and jurisdictions (USA, European Union, Scandinavia) have long ago come to similar conclusions and have taken concerted action to protect the health of their populations.

Scientists from the Radiation Safety Institute have reviewed the Health Canada research findings and discussed the results with Health Canada. "Our scientists have no reason to dispute the results" says Institute President, Fergal Nolan. "In fact, we applaud Health Canada for the new rigor it has shown on the radon issue since it finally lowered the radon exposure guidelines in 2006".

"For Canadians, the new findings make it even more urgent that all homes and schools be tested for radon", adds Institute radiation scientist, Lynn MacDonald. "The solution is not difficult. Radon testing is simple and, if there is a problem, remediation is often easy. By taking these steps, Canadians can protect their families from unnecessary radiation exposure and potential future lung cancers."

Radon testing is best done during the fall and winter months when windows are mostly closed. Full information on radon, its health effects and on radon testing and remediation can be found on the Radiation Safety Institute's website, www.RadiationSafety.ca. For radon tests, please email: radon@radiationsafety.ca

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