Have You Checked the Radon Levels in Your Home?

Do you know if radon exists in your home?

Radon is an invisible, odorless radioactive gas released from the ground during the natural decay of radium and uranium.

When air pressure inside a house or building is lower than the soil surrounding it, radon seeps in through cracks in the foundation, floor or walls, as well as other openings.

When inhaled, radon gas particles are deposited into the lungs. In fact, radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer behind smoking, for both smokers and non-smokers in the U.S. It is estimated that 21,000 people die of radon-related lung cancer every year.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and The U.S. Surgeon General, recommend testing your home for radon. Radon is found in new and old homes, with or without basements. Levels of radon can also vary area to area, and house to house.

Measured in picocuries per liter (pCi/L), levels between 2 pCi/L and 4 pCi/L are considered elevated levels and action is considered necessary.

EPA’s Map of Radon Zones assigns each county in the U.S. one of three zones, based on an average indoor screening level.

Zone 1 counties have a screening level of more than 4 pCi/L.

Zone 2 counties have a screening level between 2 and 4 pCi/L.

Zone 3 counties have a screening level of less than 2 pCi/L.

Spokane is assigned as a Zone 1 area.

In the past 12 years of doing business, Mark Gerard of Advanced Radon Technology has tested many homes. The highest measured at 400 pCi/L.

How do you find out if your house has elevated levels?

Since you can’t see it, smell it or taste it, the only way to know what the radon levels are in your home is to perform a test. Testing is easy and should only take a few minutes of your time—read sidebar on right for more information.

The Spokane-area is in a Higher Risk Zone for Radon

Testing radon levels in your home is fairly easy. The quickest way to test is with short-term tests. Short-term tests remain in your home for 2-90 days, depending on the device. Because radon levels tend to vary from day to day and season to season, a short-term test is less likely than a long-term test to tell you your year-round average radon level.

Test kits are available online and from many home improvement and hardware stores. They range in price from $10-30 and include detailed directions.

Another option is hiring a Radon Specialist to conduct an assessment. Specialists are listed in the phone book yellow pages under “radon.” According to our research, Specialists typically charge between $75-125.

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Test Kits
Inexpensive, Easy-to-Use

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EPA Proposes New Smog Standard

Earlier this month, the EPA announced its proposal to strengthen the National Ambient Air Quality Standard for ground-level ozone, a key ingredient in smog. The agency is proposing to set the public health standard at a level between 0.060 and 0.070 parts per million (ppm) measured over eight hours.

Ground-level ozone forms when Volatile Organic Compounds—emitted from industrial facilities, gasoline stations and motor vehicle refueling, etc. and Nitrogen Oxides—react in the sun. Ozone levels peak in July and August on hot, summer days.

Children are at the greatest risk from ozone because their lungs are still developing, they are most likely to be active outdoors and they are more likely than adults to have asthma. Adults with asthma or other lung diseases and older adults are also sensitive to ozone.

For more information about the ozone and EPA’s proposal and next steps, visit: www.epa.gov/groundlevelozone

How will this affect Spokane?

It all depends on where the final standard is set within the proposed range. The last three years would constitute a violation if the final standard is set at the bottom of the range of 0.060 ppm. If the area falls out of compliance, one likely strategy will be requiring Stage II Vapor Recovery at gasoline stations throughout the county.

Below is a graph with the proposed standard range as compared to the measured ozone levels in Spokane over the last nine years.

Radon... continued from cover page

What do I do if results show radon above recommended levels?

Repairs may be necessary. Common repairs include sealing cracks and openings in floors and walls, and around pipes, to reduce radon from seeping into the home. Plastic sheeting and mitigation systems can also be installed by a Radon Specialist. Typical costs range between $1,100-1,500.

Prior to purchasing a home, the EPA recommends that all prospective buyers know what the indoor radon level is. If the home has been tested for radon, ask the seller for information on the tests used and their results. If the home hasn’t been tested, it should be done before you buy. Remember, any home can have a radon problem, new or old.

In the Spokane-area it is important to know that radon fluctuates depending on the season. Levels are lower in summer and higher in winter, making the best time for testing in spring or fall.

Radon is something we all need to stay informed about because of the health consequences. Testing your home for radon brings peace of mind. If elevated levels are discovered - it is fixable!

January is National Radon Month. To learn more about radon, we’ve listed some resources:


Radon Hotlines

1-800-SOS-RADON (1-800-767-7236)* National Radon Hotline to purchase radon test kits by phone.

1-800-55RADON (1-800-557-2366)* National Radon Helpline. Live help for your radon questions.

1-800-644-6999* National Radon Fix-It Line for general information on fixing or reducing the radon level in your home.

*Operated by Kansas State University in partnership with EPA
ON THE AIR
Fiber-Tech Industries, Inc.
2010 Clean Air Award Recipient

The recipient of the 2010 Clean Air Award is Fiber-Tech Industries located in Spokane Valley Industrial Park. The award is presented annually by the Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency to a business that has consistently demonstrated a significant commitment of resources to reduce overall air emissions. The award will be presented to the company at an event ceremony next month.

Fiber-Tech Industries is the largest supplier of fiberglass reinforced plywood panels to the transportation, construction and agricultural markets in the U.S. and Canada. The company incorporated in 1983 and operates one of its three U.S. locations at the Spokane Valley Industrial Park.

As part of the process to manufacture fiberglass-reinforced panels, plywood is bonded to a surface material generally a gel coat, using polyester resin reinforced with preformed fiberglass. Styrene, which is considered a Hazardous Air Pollutant and a Volatile Organic Compound (VOC), is contained in the resins and gel coats and emitted as part of the process.

Beginning in 2000, Fiber-Tech commenced a significant project to implement several major pollution prevention technologies in their materials, processes and products.

Materials—With the help of raw material suppliers, materials were developed that would meet Fiber-Tech’s requirements at the lower emissions levels. This was achieved by reducing the volatile organic compound content and suppressing the evaporation of the VOCs in the materials.

Processes—After several years of development, a low atomizing application used in other processes was adapted for Fiber-Tech’s gel coat process. The new process creates larger droplets which reduces the emitting area during application. It also allows less material to be used for a given coating thickness.

Products—With cooperation from their suppliers and customers, Fiber-Tech was able to replace gel coat surfaces with non-emitting surfaces on key products.

Implementation of these technologies took a significant commitment of time and resources. The company worked extensively with their suppliers to develop lower VOC materials that could be used with their current equipment. Once the new technologies were implemented, these new panels had to be field-tested.

With all of the pollution prevention advances in place, Fiber-Tech’s VOC emissions at the facility have been reduced by 98 tons per year, which translates to a 55% reduction in emissions from the facility.

“Spokane Clean Air is proud to recognize Fiber Tech for their efforts and innovation and appreciate their efforts to improve our air quality,” comments Bill Dameworth, Director of Spokane Clean Air.

Roger Mola (left) and Rick Sherwood of Fiber-Tech Industries, Inc.

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**Air Quality Calendar**

**Happy New Year!**

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<td>Feb. 4</td>
<td>Board of Directors meeting, 9 a.m, Spokane Clean Air’s office, 3104 E. Augusta Ave. Monthly meeting agendas available online at <a href="http://www.spokanecleanair.org">www.spokanecleanair.org</a>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar. 4</td>
<td>Board of Directors meeting, details above.</td>
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<td>Apr. 1</td>
<td>Board of Directors meeting, details above.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr. 10</td>
<td>North Spokane County’s Chipping and Composting Day, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. at Fire Station 49 on Hwy 395 and Monroe Rd.</td>
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<td>Apr. 24</td>
<td>Arbor Day Event and Compost Fair at Finch Arboretum.</td>
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<td>Apr. 25</td>
<td>Earth Day Festivities at Riverfront Park</td>
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**Got an Old, Inefficient Wood Stove? Enter-to-win a new one!**

Spokane Clean Air is partnering with Spokane Chimney and The Fireplace Center to give away a new, cleaner burning wood burning stove. The two-week promotion runs January 15-31. Stop by at one of these wood stove retailer locations and check-out their new line of high-efficient wood, gas and pellet toves and inserts. While you are there, enter-to-win a new wood stove. **Installation is not included. Contest rules apply, see store for details.**

**On the Air** is a publication of the Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency. Its purpose is to inform local residents on all aspects of outdoor air pollution. Please contact Lisa Woodard, Editor, with comments or story ideas:

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