

INDOOR AIR RADON PROGRAM

Protecting Children and Adults from the Risks of Radon in Indoor Air

Why EPA's Radon Program Is Important

EPA is the federal agency primarily responsible for protecting Americans from exposure to radon in the indoor air of homes, schools and other buildings. Exposure to radon in the indoor air of homes is the leading environmental cause of cancer mortality in the United States. An estimated 21,000 people die each year from radon-induced lung cancer. Radon in indoor air is also a risk factor for children and adult occupants in schools. Sadly, the five-year lung cancer survival rate of 18.6% is lower than that for many other forms of cancer. Yet many radon-related lung cancers are preventable when appropriate action is taken.

- EPA and the office of the U.S. Surgeon General recommend taking action to reduce the radon level when a test result indicates 4 picocuries of radon per liter of air (pCi/L) or more.
- Nationally, EPA estimates that one in 15 homes has radon at a level that should be mitigated (reduced). In some states, data show that one in 5 homes may have a radon level of concern.
- The national goal, as established by Congress, is that the radon level in buildings should be as free of radon as the ambient air outside.

How EPA's Radon Program Works

The EPA Radon Program works to save lives by encouraging the public to take action. EPA provides guidance on risk reduction to homeowners, landlords, home builders, school administrators and others. The agency's strategy is two pronged: build new homes to be radon resistant, and mitigate radon in existing homes. Progress is primarily achieved through:

- Education and awareness campaigns, public assistance, and technical guidance for the radon services industry and building code organizations.
- Funded cooperative partnerships and contracts with non-governmental associations (NGOs) such as the American Lung Association, which leads the National Radon Action Plan, a national framework for reducing radon risks.
- Indoor radon grants to state and tribal governments (25% and 40% matches are required of new and returning recipients, respectively).

EPA also works in partnership with state and local governments, the radon services industry, NGOs, and with other federal agencies. The agency provides a website (www.epa.gov/radon), and EPA headquarters and regional staff answer public inquiries and engage in outreach and presentations to the public. It also utilizes print, radio, and television public service announcements (PSAs) (www.epapsa.com) and celebrates National Radon Action Month each January.

Consequences of Reducing Funding or Eliminating EPA's Radon Program

- Public understanding and awareness of the risk of radon to their lung health would see a national decline.
- A drop in risk-reducing action by the public would result in a preventable loss of life nationwide.
- The home-building industry would build fewer radon-resistant homes, also resulting in a preventable nationwide loss of life.

- The radon services industry would see a decline in demand for testing and mitigation by homeowners and landlords, and a corresponding decline in the availability of services. Many radon services companies are small businesses or sole proprietorships.
- Most statewide and tribal government radon programs would cease to exist, with a corresponding decline in awareness and risk-reducing action by their citizens.
- The millions of dollars in air time donated by the broadcast industry for airing EPA's radon PSAs would decline or disappear.

Demonstrated Successes

- EPA's radon program is among the most cost effective agencywide. Since 1986, thousands of lives have been saved, millions of existing homes have been mitigated and made healthier, and tens of millions of dollars in lung cancer medical treatment costs have been averted. In addition, millions of new homes have been built radon-resistant and made healthier since 1990. As of 2013, an estimated 2.7 million homes had been mitigated or built radon-resistant.
- Although much progress has been made, much more remains to be done. Available EPA data show that in 2009, only 12% of homes requiring mitigation had been addressed, and 36.1% of new homes in high radon potential areas had been built radon-resistant.

Funding for EPA's Radon Program

Since fiscal year 2012 to the present, the budgets put forward to Congress by both the Obama and Trump Administrations have to varying degrees either proposed elimination of or reduced funding for the radon program. Nevertheless, each year congressional appropriators have explicitly restored funding for radon, including an average of \$8 million in funding for state and tribal grants.

FY2016 Baseline Budget: \$3.082 million

FY2017 President's Budget Proposal: \$3.413 million

FY2017 Amount Appropriated: \$3.076 million

FY2018 President's Budget Proposal: \$0

FY2018 Amount Appropriated: \$3.273 million

FY2019 President's Budget Proposal: \$0 million

FY2019 Amount Appropriated: \$3.295 million

FY2020 President's Budget Proposal: \$0 million