

In honor of National Radon Action Month, the safety topic this month is RADON!

### **What is radon?**

Radon is a radioactive gas that occurs naturally in the soil, ground water and outdoor air. It is formed from the decay of uranium which is found in trace amounts in the earth's crust. Because it is a gas, radon migrates into the surrounding soil gas.

### **What are the health risks of radon?**

The EPA considers radon gas to be a leading cause of lung cancer in the United States, second only to smoking. Radon health risks are preventable if appropriate steps are taken to test for and mitigate radon hazards.

### **How does radon enter buildings?**

When a building is constructed, radon-containing soil gas may accumulate inside the structure. Pressure differentials between the building interior and exterior may be created, especially when there is a significant temperature difference. Under these conditions, a "stack effect" may develop with the building under negative pressure relative to the surrounding environment, including the soil gas below the slab. To satisfy the negative pressure, air migrates into the building through holes or cracks in the foundation, around pipes, or through drains or sump pumps.

### **What is a high level of radon?**

Levels of radon are measured in picoCuries per liter of air (pCi/L). The EPA and MDH advise schools to test for radon and to reduce levels to below 4 pCi/L.

### **How do I test my schools for radon?**

There are two general ways to test for radon: a short-term (2-7 day) test, or a long-term (90 days-to-one year) test. Activated charcoal canisters are generally used for the short-term tests while alpha track detectors are used for long-term tests. Radon testing programs should be designed and supervised by a qualified consultant who can also provide recommendations if elevated levels are found.

## **REPORTING DEADLINES**

- **Hazardous Waste Annual Report**—due by January 31, 2010, although deadline varies depending on county
- **OSHA 300 Summary**—posted February 1 through April 30, 2010, in each building
- **Tier 2 Reports**—completed online and due to MN Homeland Security and Emergency Management by March 1, 2010
- **Air Emissions Report**—due to MN Pollution Control Agency by April 1, 2010

## **January is National Radon Action Month**

Please visit the EPA website for more information:

[www.epa.gov/radon/nram/index.html](http://www.epa.gov/radon/nram/index.html)

## **OSHA's Recordkeeping Requirements for H1N1 Infections**

According to OSHA's website, all employers covered by the recordkeeping rule are responsible for recording cases of H1N1 illness if all the following requirements are met:

- It is a confirmed case of H1N1 illness (as defined by CDC)
- The case is work-related
- The case involves one or more of the recording criteria as defined by OSHA (e.g. medical treatment or days away from work)



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