To: Local News Media  
From: Central Michigan District Health Department, Environmental Health Division  
RE: Radon Awareness Month  
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TEST KITS OFFERED FOR RADON AWARENESS MONTH

January is Radon Awareness Month and the Central Michigan District Health Department invites you and your family to join others in taking the “test” for radon in your home. Radon is a cancer-causing radioactive gas. You cannot see, smell, or taste radon, but it may be a problem in your home. When you breathe air which contains radon, you increase your risk of getting lung cancer. In fact, the Surgeon General says that radon is the leading cause of lung cancer deaths among nonsmokers in America. About 20,000 Americans will die each year of radon-related lung cancer. More than 600 of these people will reside in Michigan. If you smoke and your home has high radon levels, your risk of lung cancer is especially high.

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas resulting from the natural breakdown of uranium. Most soils contain varying amounts of uranium. Radon in soil, groundwater, or building materials enters working and living spaces and begins to disintegrate into its decay product. This decay product can attach to the surface of aerosols, dusts, and smoke particles. These particles then may be inhaled, whereby becoming deeply lodged or trapped in the lungs.

Radon and its decay products are more concentrated in confined air spaces. “For this reason, radon levels are typically higher in homes during the winter months when doors and windows are closed more often and air circulation is poor. “This is why the winter months are the best time of the year to test your home” says Environmental Health Director, Michelle Patton.

Radon is a national environmental health problem. Elevated radon levels have been discovered in virtually every state. The EPA estimates that as many as 8 million homes throughout the country have elevated levels of radon. State surveys to date show that 1 out of 8 homes have elevated radon levels. Indoor radon has been judged to be the most serious environmental cancer-causing agent to which the general public is exposed and which the EPA must address.
Some scientific studies of radon exposure indicate that children may be more sensitive to radon. This may be due to their higher respiration rate and their rapidly dividing cells, which may be more vulnerable to radiation damage.

Testing is the only way to know your homes radon levels. Contrary to popular belief, “radon exposure does not cause headaches, nausea, fatigue, or skin rashes like other environmental toxins” states Ms. Patton. There are no immediate symptoms that will alert you to the presence of radon. It typically takes years of exposure before any problems surface and then it is too late. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Surgeon General, American Lung Association, American Medical Association and National Safety Council all recommend testing your home for radon.

Radon tests are easy to do and are available at any local health department. During the month of January, at any of the Central Michigan District Health Department offices, test kits will be $5 or free with a donation of a nonperishable food item. We will donate these food items to local food pantries in our Health district where they will be appreciated after the holidays have depleted their supplies, says Director Patton.

More general Radon information is available by calling the Central Michigan District Health Department or visiting the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Website at http://www.epa.gov/radon/index.html or http://www.michigan.gov/deq/.

This article has been brought to you by Central Michigan District Health Department, which serves the counties of Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola and Roscommon. Visit our website at www.cmdhd.org and LIKE Central Michigan District Health Department on Facebook.

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