

Subject World Health Organization Radon Handbook Released
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Press
Release

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION LAUNCHES NEW ATTACK ON LUNG CANCER

ST. LOUIS (9/21/2009) - In simultaneous releases published around the globe today, the World Health Organization (WHO) called for stronger action against indoor radon, the leading cause of lung cancer among U.S. and Canadian non-smokers.

The central WHO recommendation is to lower radon gas levels by one-third below the current U.S. guidance. *The lower WHO action level doubles the number of U.S. homes needing radon control systems from 8 million to 15 million.*

According to Bill Angell, President of the American Association of Radon Scientists and Technologists (AARST), "The WHO recommendations more strongly emphasize the importance of radon testing by all home owners and home buyers and reduction of high concentrations of the radioactive gas."

Speaking from the 2009 International Radon Symposium, Angell adds, "The World Health Organization's strong stand is based upon new evidence of the risk posed by toxic radon." The new WHO Handbook on Indoor Radon: A Public Health Perspective lists the consensus of scientists from more than 30 countries that radon in homes is responsible for about one of every seven lung cancer deaths in countries such as the U.S.

Over 21,000 Americans die each year from radon induced lung cancer.

In the handbook, WHO recommends a threshold of action of 2.7 picocuries per liter (pCi/L), a measure of radioactivity.

The new threshold contrasts with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) level of 4 pCi/L; an action level that has been in place for 40 years.

In addition to testing, the WHO handbook notes that indoor radon is the result of the way we design and build homes. Thus, WHO places clear responsibility for radon exposure on architects, builders, and real estate professionals and urges radon control system in new homes and testing homes for sale.

Elevated indoor radon may be inexpensively fixed or prevented through radon control systems installed by certified or licensed radon professionals.

For more information:

WHO Handbook on Indoor Radon: A Public Health Perspective
http://www.who.int/ionizing_radiation/env/radon/en/index1.html

WHO Radon Webpage http://www.who.int/ionizing_radiation/env/radon/en/index.html

American Association of Radon Scientists and Technologists <http://www.aarst.org>

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency <http://www.epa.gov/radon/>

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