Radon Awareness Week in the United States, October 17-24, 2011

National Radon Action Week is quickly approaching. October 17th-24th is the week that Americans are urged to test their homes, schools, and workplaces for the second leading cause of lung cancer: radon gas. The United States government has announced their "action plan" to reduce lung cancer risk to the American public through new radon testing and mitigation requirements. Multiple branches of the government have been recruited to enforce these new requirements. According to radon mitigation specialist Ross Aton, "The plan will save thousands of lives every year in the U.S."

The government is implementing new radon testing and remediation requirements with the assistance of U.S Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the General Services Administration, and the departments of Agriculture, Defense, Energy, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Interior, and Veterans Affairs. The plan will require radon testing and reduction in American homes and workplaces. Testing for radon gas during real estate transactions will be a requirement and mitigation will be necessary when the levels of radon gas are dangerous. Also, schools, daycares, commercial and office buildings will be tested for radon to protect the American public outside of their homes. Learn more about the plan at Federal Radon Action Plan.

"Radon gas causes more deaths every year than home fires and carbon monoxide combined," states Jeffery Finken, a radon specialist with Air Quality Control, North America's largest mitigation contractor. "The problem is easy to fix. It's simply a matter of testing to find out if the problem is there," adds Dan Tompkins of AQC. The World Health Organization recommends radon testing in all homes worldwide. National Radon Week is the perfect time to find out if your family is at risk.

So what do you do if your house tests positive for radon? The radon mitigation options appropriate for a house depend on the construction type of the house. Houses with basements, slabs, or crawl-spaces may require different techniques. For houses with basements or slabs, the most common technique for radon remediation is active sub slab suction which may also be called sub slab depressurization. This approach places one or more suction pipes through the slab into the material underneath the house. These pipes are then connected to a fan that draws the radon gas through the pipes and vent it above the house where it is safely dispersed.

There are other variants of this approach available as well. These variations use existing features of the house to connect to the suction pipes and provide for radon evacuation. Options include using existing perforated pipes or drain tiles around the foundation of the house, using a sump-pump hole, or using the space inside of the foundation walls found in block-wall foundations to remove the radon.

For houses with crawl-spaces, a similar technique for radon remediation is available. This approach, called sub membrane suction, places a plastic sheet in the crawl-space directly above the ground and then uses a suction pipe and fan to draw the radon out from underneath the plastic and vent it to the outside. It is possible to attempt this without the plastic sheet, but it is less effective and may cause other airflow issues in the house, including increased energy costs. Learn more at the Radon Mitigation website.

Other radon mitigation techniques are available, but should be in conjunction with one of the other techniques listed above. These techniques include sealing, positive pressurization, and improved ventilation within the house. Each of these, however, has weaknesses. For example, it is difficult to ensure all cracks are sealed and that new cracks do not appear and improved ventilation may be impacted by weather and is likely to increase energy costs within the home. Regardless of the method used for radon mitigation in a home, it is important to ensure that a properly qualified contractor to perform the work. Many states license or certify contractors for radon remediation and you should always check credentials before hiring anyone.

For 2011, Federal Radon Testing Week is October 17th - 24th. The American media is stepping up this year and reminding families throughout the country to test and mitigate during this nationally-designated week. "Radon testing kits are readily available in hardware stores and through local health departments," states Ben Ingalls, Director of Radon Removal for Air Quality Control of Denver. You can also purchase electronic radon detectors online at the Radon Monitor website or by calling 1-800-NO-RADON.

Residents of Colorado, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Indiana, Michigan, Kentucky, Alabama, Tennessee, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, West Virginia, Virginia, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire are eligible for special discounts on radon reduction systems during radon awareness week by calling Air Quality Control Agency at 1-800-667-2366.