

MEDIA RELEASE

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New Brunswick Lung Association Officially Launches Radon Awareness Campaign

Fredericton – The New Brunswick Lung Association, in partnership with the New Brunswick Department of Health and Health Canada, launched its campaign for radon awareness today. The goals of the campaign are to inform New Brunswickers about radon and encourage homeowners to test their homes for the gas. The President and CEO of the New Brunswick Lung Association, Dr. Barbara MacKinnon, was on hand to provide details on this relatively unknown and dangerous radioactive gas.

Radon is formed from the breakdown of uranium in the soil. The gas can seep into homes undetected because it cannot be seen, tasted, or smelled. This allows the gas to accumulate to dangerous levels without the home's occupants knowing.

"The Government of Canada supports the New Brunswick Lung Association's efforts to raise awareness about the dangers of radon," said the Honourable Leona Aglukkaq, Minister of Health. "Today's announcement will provide New Brunswickers with important information on radon's risks, how to test their homes and how to reduce their exposure."

The standard measurement for the concentration of radon is becquerels per cubic metre (Bq/m³). In 2006, Health Canada lowered its guideline for long-term radon exposure from 800 Bq/m³ to 200 Bq/m³ after learning more about its health effects.

Exposure to high levels of radon can cause lung cancer. In fact, it's the leading cause of lung cancer for non-smokers. Lifelong smokers increase their chances of developing the disease from 1 in 8 to 1 in 3.

While the chances of having high levels of radon in your home are greater where there are known deposits of uranium, any home can have a dangerous concentration of radon gas. Results can vary so much from house to house that using your neighbours measurement is simply not an option. Also, the age, type, and location of your house have no bearing on the likelihood of having a high concentration of radon in your home. The only way to know if there is too much radon in your home is to test.

"It's a real health risk" said Dr. Barbara MacKinnon, President and CEO of the New Brunswick Lung Association. "What we want to convey to New Brunswickers though, is that testing for radon and reducing radon levels in your home is easy."

The New Brunswick Lung Association is currently selling long-term radon test kits for \$35. “All you have to do with these radon detectors is place them in the lowest occupied room of your home for 3 months” said Kurtis Knappe, Project Coordinator for the program at the New Brunswick Lung Association. “After the three months, you send the detector to a lab for analysis and the results are sent back to you.”

If the level of radon is too high in your home, Health Canada recommends some simple renovations like sealing cracks in your foundation. The New Brunswick Lung Association recommends contacting a contractor familiar with radon remediation. Your next best option is to consult the Canadian Housing and Mortgage Corporation’s “RADON: A Guide for Canadian Homeowners” for methods to reduce radon levels.

For more information about radon and how to order a test kit, you can visit the New Brunswick Lung Association’s website: www.nb.lung.ca. Remember,

“When you can’t breathe, nothing else matters.”

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