

A Health and Safety Bulletin from

UI HealthWorks and WORKSAFE IOWA

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January - Radon Action Month

Radon is a potent environmental carcinogen. This colorless, odorless gas is ranked by national and state environmental agencies as one of the most important environmental health risks facing the nation. Exposure to radon is the 2nd leading cause of lung cancer in the US and the primary cause of lung cancer for individuals who have never smoked.

In December, Dr. Bill Field, professor in the University of Iowa Department of Occupational and Environmental Health, was asked to testify before a presidential panel on environmental factors in cancer. In his presentation on radon exposure, he pointed out that "because we are building homes without radon resistant features faster than we are mitigating homes to reduce radon concentrations, more people are exposed to radon than ever before." He added that more medical procedures and tests use radiation than before, with the consequence of this increasing radiation exposure being an individual's increased potential for cancer.

Dr. Field also noted that Iowa has the highest average radon concentration in the country. The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) suggests that home-buyers include testing by a certified radon measurement specialist as part of the purchase agreement. Radon mitigation systems are available to reduce concentrations in homes. In addition, the technology and methods for radon-resistant new construction are now available.

EPA (National Radon Action Month) - www.epa.gov/radon/nram/index.html

IDPH (Radon Program) - www.idph.state.ia.us/eh/radon.asp -

IDPH Iowa Radon Hotline - 1-800-383-5992

IDPH (Radon Results by County) - www.idph.state.ia.us/eh/common/pdf/radon/radon_by_county_1990-2007.pdf

EPA (Radon-resistant New Construction) - www.epa.gov/radon/construc.html

NIOSH Science Blog: Your Comments Wanted

If you would like to participate in a broad discussion of a current occupational health topic, share your thoughts on the Science Blog of the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). Recent topics include back injuries in healthcare, immigrant workers, and the firefighter fatality prevention program.

NIOSH (Science Blog - comment policy) - www.cdc.gov/niosh/blog/policy.html

There's Absenteeism and Now...

Described as a "new disease" in the workplace, "presenteeism" may affect as much as 75% of workers. Sick employees insist on coming to work, exposing healthy co-workers, reducing productivity, and potentially jeopardizing their and others' safety. You can tackle the problem head-on with clear communication.

How to Get Sick Workers to Just Stay Home -

www.safetyxchange.org/health-safety/how-to-get-sick-workers-to-just-stay-home-2

Upcoming CSOMA Educational Opportunities

"Where Medicine Meets the Workplace" (March 19) and "The Pillars of Occupational Health" (March 20-21) - for occupational medicine physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners and occupational health nurses. Location: Lisle, IL. Co-sponsors: Central States Occupational Medical Association, WORKSAFE IOWA

www.public-health.uiowa.edu/worksafe/education/continuing_ed.html

UI HealthWorks is a member of the WORKSAFE IOWA Occupational Medicine Associate Network, the only university-affiliated network of occupational health providers. WORKSAFE IOWA is an outreach program of the Department of Occupational and Environmental Health in the College of Public Health at the University of Iowa (www.public-health.uiowa.edu/worksafe).