

=====Electronic Edition=====

RACHEL'S HAZARDOUS WASTE NEWS #3

---Dec. 15, 1986---

News and resources for environmental justice.

Environmental Research Foundation
P.O. Box 5036, Annapolis, MD 21403
Fax (410) 263-8944; Internet: erf@igc.apc.org

=====

The [Back issues](#) and [Index](#) are available here.

The [official RACHEL archive](#) is here. It's updated constantly.

To subscribe, send E-mail to rachel-weekly-request@world.std.com

with the single word SUBSCRIBE in the message. It's free.

===[Previous issue](#)=====Next issue===

**AGENCY URGES RADON TESTING ON ALL NJ HOMES NORTH OF
TRENTON.**

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has set the first home safety standard for radioactive radon gas, recommending that homeowners take action to reduce the level of radon gas if it exceeds 4 picocuries per liter of air. One picocurie (a trillionth of a curie, a common measure of radiation) represents the decay of two radon atoms per minute in a liter of air.

Radon is a colorless, odorless gas produced by the decay of naturally-occurring uranium in soil; prolonged exposure to radon can cause lung cancer. The EPA estimated that as many as 8 million homes across the nation may exceed the standard and people in such homes should take steps to reduce the level and not smoke tobacco. A spokesman for the NY State Health Department said that a recent survey indicated that 15% of the homes in that state have radon levels exceeding 4 picocuries.

Five homes in Clinton, NJ have radon levels of 1,000 picocuries and 200 homes have levels above 4 picocuries. PA state officials say that more than 13,000 of 22,000 homes in 4 eastern PA counties surveyed had levels exceeding 4 picocuries.

Environmental officials said homeowners have to have their homes tested to find out if it contains the gas which can't be seen or smelled. Testing kits may be bought by homeowners for \$10 to \$50 apiece or private contractors can be hired. A spokesman for the radiation division of the EPA called radon "the biggest environmental radiation problem" in the US today. The agency said radon could account for 5,000 to 20,000 lung cancer deaths nationwide each year.

Several NJ municipalities are offering local homeowners inexpensive kits for testing homes for radon. Manville, Raritan and Somerville are offering test kits for \$15 each. A local health official places the collector in the home, returns 3 days later to pick it up for analyzing, and reports the results directly to

the homeowner. Two other Somerset County towns, Branchburg and Bridgewater, are providing low-cost testing kits, but homeowners must place the collectors themselves. Public health experts have recommended that NJ homeowners north of Trenton test their homes for radon.

To reduce radon levels, homeowners may need to take steps as simple as installing fans for ventilation, (estimated to cost about \$150) or as involved as sealing cracks along walls and floors (\$300-\$500) and installing exhaust pipes to draw the radon back outdoors (costing from \$2,500 to \$5,000). NJ radon hotline: 800-648-0394.

--Peter Montague, Ph.D.

Descriptor terms: epa; nj; ny; pa; lung cancer; radon; standards; testing; radiation; ventilation; indoor air pollution; regulations;

[Next issue](#)