

# Connecticut Department of Public Health

## **RADON PROGRAM**

### **School Testing Initiative**

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#### **What is Radon?**

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the U.S. Surgeon General, and other national scientific organizations have concluded that radon is a human carcinogen and a serious environmental health problem. Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that comes from the natural breakdown of uranium found in soil and rock. It is colorless, odorless, and tasteless. Long-term exposure to elevated levels of radon (4 picocuries per liter (pCi/L) or greater) increases the risk of developing lung cancer. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S. causing an estimated 14,000 deaths a year. Radon gas travels through the soil and enters buildings through cracks and other openings in the foundation. The only way to know if there is a high level of radon inside a building is to test for it.

#### **Radon Research**

Early concerns about indoor radon were directed at the home environment. However, research conducted by EPA indicates that school classrooms with high radon might also pose an environmental health problem for students and faculty. Research was initiated in 1988 with an investigation of radon in schools located in Fairfax County, Virginia. In 1989, EPA recommended that schools nationwide be tested for the presence of radon. The results of this nationwide survey indicated that nearly one in five U.S. schools have at least one ground contact room with short-term radon levels above 4 pCi/L; the level at which EPA suggests mitigation.

#### **Connecticut's Response to Radon**

In 1990, the Connecticut Department of Public Health (CT DPH) initiated the School Testing Program (STP) for Connecticut schools. In collaboration with local health departments and school administrators, the program targeted schools located in high radon potential areas for testing. Radon testing was conducted using methods developed by the EPA. To date, 253 schools in 46 municipalities have been tested.

According to Connecticut General Statute § 10-220(2), "prior to January 1, 2008, and every five years thereafter, every school building that is constructed, extended, renovated, or replaced on or after January 1, 2003 shall be inspected and evaluated for radon levels in air and water."

#### **For More Information**

For more information, technical guidance, or copies of publications such as *Reducing Radon In Schools: A Team Approach* and *Radon Measurement In Schools, Revised Edition*, please contact the Connecticut Department of Public Health, Radon Program:

Phone: 860/509-7367

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Website: [www.dph.state.ct.us/BRS/Radon/radon\\_program.htm](http://www.dph.state.ct.us/BRS/Radon/radon_program.htm)