

FEBRUARY 4, 2013: FEDERAL RADON ACTION PLAN

Celebrating Success. Looking to the Future.

The Risk of Radon

Radon causes an estimated 21,000 lung cancer deaths in the United States every year. It is the second leading cause of lung cancer after active smoking and the leading cause among nonsmokers.

Even though we've made progress in addressing high radon levels, because of housing construction over the last twenty years, there are more homes today in the United States with elevated radon levels than ever before.

Most low-income Americans do not have the financial resources to mitigate high radon levels in their homes and many other Americans are not yet convinced of the value of mitigating high radon levels.

Many radon-induced lung cancer deaths are preventable. Testing for and mitigating high radon levels uses time-proven, straightforward techniques. Homes can now be built to resist radon intrusion.

Protecting People and Families from Radon: A Federal Action Plan for Saving Lives

In 2011, leaders from nine federal agencies began exploring strategies that would have a significant and long-term impact on indoor radon risk reduction. Creativity, persistence and a focus on public health led senior leaders from the nine agencies to produce the first-ever comprehensive, multi-agency effort to address the leading environmental cause of cancer death in North America. The result is the Federal Radon Action Plan.

Together, the agencies committed to 33 specific actions with radon reducing potential – actions that could be completed with existing resources and take advantage of interagency collaboration to extend their reach and increase their impact.

EPA's Deputy Administrator and the Deputy Secretary of HUD formally announced the Action Plan at the National Healthy Homes Conference in Denver, Colorado in June 2011.

The nine agencies celebrated the Action Plan's one-year anniversary at CDC's National Cancer Conference in Washington, DC on August 22, 2012. At this event, EPA's Assistant Administrator for Air and Radiation was joined by the Assistant Secretary for Health from HHS and the Deputy Secretary of HUD to showcase the actions and activities that have resulted from the plan.

Participating Agencies

- Department of Agriculture (USDA)
- Department of Defense (DOD)
- Department of Energy (DOE)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- General Services Administration (GSA)
- Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
- Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- Department of the Interior (DOI)
- Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

Accomplishments Through Collaboration

As the Action Plan Scorecard illustrates — <https://wcms.epa.gov/radon/protecting-people-and-families-radon-federal-action-plan-saving-lives> — to date, over half of the commitments made by the federal agencies have been fulfilled and over a dozen more are on track to completion.

These accomplishments demonstrate the power of federal interagency collaboration, and illustrate the success that is possible when federal agencies unite. Through its network of residential, educational, and care facilities as well as programs that address health, prevention, housing, and finance, the federal government is employing a three-pronged strategy that addresses key barriers to widespread, voluntary radon risk reduction:

Barriers to widespread, voluntary radon risk reduction:	Opportunities for action – A strategy for saving lives:
Limited public understanding of the gravity of the risk and the fact that the solution is proven and uses readily available technology.	Demonstrate the importance, feasibility and value of radon testing and mitigation.
Perceived high costs of mitigation and radon-resistant construction relative to the perceived increased value at the time of resale.	Provide economic incentives to encourage those who have sufficient resources to test and mitigate, and provide direct support to reduce the risk for those who lack sufficient resources.
Limited nationwide availability of certified radon measurement and mitigation professionals.	Conduct testing/perform mitigation when necessary and build demand for services from the professional, nationwide radon services industry.

As evidenced by the accomplishments below, the Action Plan takes advantage of the government’s unique ability to lead through demonstration, leverage programs across agencies to maximize their benefits, and use the visibility of government action to increase public understanding and focus public activity.

Conduct testing and perform mitigation when necessary

- HUD wrote new radon testing and mitigation requirements for participants in a significant portion of HUD’s multifamily housing mortgage insurance programs, and if program activity in 2013 is similar to that in 2012, the new requirements will be applicable to an estimated 105,000 housing units in 2013.
- HUD’s Healthy Homes Production Program grantees will assess or test an estimated 1,400 housing units for radon this year (based on an estimated 5,600 units over a four-year grant period), and fix those that meet or exceed the EPA action level.
- DOI’s National Park Service has performed sampling and analysis at 3,223 residential units and is presently engaged in follow up testing. Approximately 2.5 percent of locations have been recommended for mitigation; planning is underway for implementation of mitigation activities. Approximately five percent of locations are being retested to verify the need, or the absence of need, to mitigate.
- EPA is investing in four new standards of practice that are desperately needed in the field to address steps for testing and fixing radon in schools, daycare facilities and multifamily housing. The American Association of Radon Scientists and Technologists just announced approval and release of a new provisional American National Standard for radon mitigation in multifamily housing in the United States – the first of its kind.



Provide incentives to encourage testing and mitigation

- USDA issued new Secretary-level guidance to all of its field office housing, community, loan (approximately 301,000 this year) and public information programs to promote radon mitigation and new construction in the delivery of Departmental programs.
- VA expects to educate and encourage veterans receiving home loans – approximately 449,000 this year -- to test their homes for radon. Through this effort, VA hopes to reach about one million veterans and their family members each year.
- HUD's PowerSaver Loan Program was revised and now allows for radon mitigation expenses.

Demonstrate the importance of radon testing and mitigation

- DOE provided health and safety training, including radon, to more than 650 weatherization program administrators through its regional Weatherization Plus Health conferences and other national conferences in 2011, and has a second round of training planned for the upcoming year.
- HHS reported that 27 CDC sponsored state five-year cancer plans now include radon, representing 41% of existing cancer plans. Of that total, two cancer programs have included radon activities for the first time and two have expanded radon activities within their plans.
- GSA has begun implementing radon programs in its buildings to reduce radon exposure for building occupants.

Moving forward, this coordinated federal action will continue to expand the potential reach and drive action towards elimination of preventable radon-induced cancer through expanded radon testing of existing homes, mitigation of high radon levels within those homes, and radon-resistant new construction.

Looking To the Future

The Action Plan is designed to catalyze industry and nonprofit action to build on, leverage and amplify the impact that federal agencies make to reduce radon risk. During this next phase of the Action Plan, federal partners are focused on maintaining momentum, increasing impacts, and fostering relationships that will advance the ultimate goal of the Federal Radon Action Plan – the elimination of preventable, radon-induced cancer through increased testing and mitigation of high radon in existing homes and schools and construction of radon-resistant new homes.

For more information, and to review and track the progress of the Federal Radon Action Plan, visit <https://wcms.epa.gov/radon/federal-radon-action-plan-frap>.