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HOME RADON LEVELS CAN SOAR DURING COLDER MONTHS

STRATFORD, CT—As Stratford residents face bitter cold temperatures we've been forced to retreat to the warmth of our homes. However we may not be aware that while nestling in the warmth of our homes, we may also be putting ourselves at an increased risk for lung cancer. "As many as 22, 000 people die from lung cancer each year in the United States from exposure to indoor radon", said US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Christie Whitman. Approximately one home in 15 across the nation has unacceptably high radon levels; in some areas of the country, as many as one out of two homes has high levels. These levels can soar during the colder months when residents keep windows and doors closed and spend more time indoors thus increasing their risk. In an effort to encourage Americans to learn about radon and to test their homes for this harmful gas, the EPA has designated the month of January as **Radon Awareness Month**.

Radon, a radioactive product of the element radium, is invisible and odorless and occurs naturally in soil, rock and water across the country. Although relatively harmless when diluted

in the open air, radon can pose a serious health threat when concentrated indoors. When inhaled, radon releases small burst of energy that can damage the DNA in lung tissue over time and lead to lung cancer.

Radon gas can leak into your house through the basement or crawl space, or through well water and can be a problem for all types of homes-*new and old*. The good news is that testing for radon in your home is simple and inexpensive. You can monitor radon levels yourself by using a screening test, which takes 2-3 days to determine radon concentrations. If the test demonstrates a radon level of 4 pCi/L (picoCurries per liter of air) or higher then a long-term test (6 months to a year) should be done to confirm the elevated levels. If long-term testing supports elevated radon levels, a qualified contractor should be brought in to help lessen or eliminate the problem, this is referred to as “mitigation”.

The Stratford Health Department would like to urge residents to test their homes for elevated levels of radon. Testing is especially important for homes that have never been tested or have undergone any new construction. You may purchase a Radon Screening Test for a reduced cost of \$10.00 at the health department located at 468 Birdseye Street, Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m. If you choose to purchase a kit at a hardware or home improvement store, look for the mark “EPA Approved.” You may also hire a radon monitoring service. Look in the yellow pages under “radon” or “labs.” For more information on radon testing and mitigation, you can contact the Environmental Health Division of the Stratford Health Department at 385-4090.

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