

Hiawatha CARE Project: Fact Sheet

Issue: Radon



Why is Radon Important?

Radon is a naturally occurring, colorless, odorless, tasteless gas that comes from deposits of uranium in soil, rock and water. Radon gas enters homes through cracks in walls and floors, gaps around utility pipes, and the water supply.

Exposure to radon becomes a concern when radon becomes trapped in buildings and builds up. Radon concentrations can vary greatly from one location to another, even between neighboring homes, because of localized soil composition, construction materials, ventilation and other contributing environmental factors. Any home can have a radon problem, regardless of whether it is old or new, drafty or insulated, with or without a basement.

How Does Radon Affect Us Locally?

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has rated all counties in the US as low, moderate, or high potential for radon. Hennepin County is in the highest potential group, which predicts average indoor radon screening levels over 4 picocuries per liter. In Minnesota, one-in-three homes have a radon level that poses a significant health risk.

Health Impacts

- Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer, after smoking, and the primary cause of lung cancer among non-smokers. Radon causes about 21,000 lung cancer deaths annually in the US, with about 2,900 of these deaths occurring among non-smokers.
- Lung cancer has one of the lowest cancer survival rates. Between 11 and 15 percent of those afflicted will live five years past diagnosis.

Environmental Impacts

- N/A

Financial Impacts

- Cost of addressing radon in the home can range from \$500 to \$2,500

Hiawatha CARE Project Partners

Alexander's Import Auto Repair	Hennepin County	Minnesota Department of Health
American Lung Association of Minnesota	Hennepin - University Partnership	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
Blue Construction	Little Earth of United Tribes	Mississippi Watershed Management Org.
City of Minneapolis	Longfellow Business Association	Preventing Harm Minnesota
East Phillips Improvement Coalition	Longfellow Community Council	St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church
Environmental Justice Advocates of Minnesota	Minnehaha Communion Lutheran Church & Longfellow Lutheran parishes	US Environmental Protection Agency
Gardening Matters	Minnehaha Creek Watershed District	Women's Environmental Institute

Hiawatha CARE Project - A project of Minnehaha-Hiawatha Community Works

What Can Individuals Do?

- Test your home for radon every two years.
- Implement radon reduction systems if testing shows your home has greater than 4 pCi/L.
- Seal cracks and other openings in a building's foundation, install "sub-slab depressurization," a radon-mitigation system with vent pipes and fans.
- Avoid spending large amounts of time in areas with high radon.
- Contact Hennepin County's Community Health Department for a list of certified radon mitigators.

What Can the Community Do?

- Conduct communitywide awareness and education program to alert community to risk.
- Subsidize radon testing for homes and schools.

What Can the City, County, and State Do?

- Minnesota requires partial radon ventilation systems (also known as passive systems) in all new homes when they are built.

For More Information

American Lung Association,
www.lungusa.org/associations/states/minnesota/indoor-outdoor-air/radon.html

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency,
www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/indoorair/radon/

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency,
www.epa.gov/radon/healthrisks.html

What is the CARE Project?

The Hiawatha CARE Project is a new effort to address environmental toxins in western Longfellow and East Phillips. The project brings together two dozen business, community, government, and non-profit agencies in a community-

driven effort to identify, prioritize, and address environmental risks in the area.

The project was initiated in December 2010 when Hennepin County received a \$100,000 Community Action for a Renewed Environment (CARE) award from the

US Environmental Protection Agency. The CARE program supports local collaborations to reduce toxins in the local community.

More Information:

www.minnehaha-hiawatha.com/care
612.348.9344.