

ALLIANCE FOR HEALTHY HOMES

Working for Affordable Healthy Housing for All



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 12, 2006

CONTACT:

Brian Gumm, Communications and Media Relations Director

202-543-1147

bgumm@afhh.org

Lung Cancer Deaths in Nonsmokers Demonstrate Urgent Need for Radon Awareness and Mitigation

Recent reports of increasing rates of lung cancer among nonsmokers in some parts of the United States and Canada reveal an urgent need for greater awareness of the dangers of radon throughout North America. Exposure to too much radon is the leading cause of lung cancer among nonsmokers and the second leading cause of lung cancer overall, causing some 21,000 lung cancer deaths annually in the U.S.

In light of the harmful health impacts of this hazard, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has declared October 15-21, 2006, National Radon Awareness Week. The EPA and the U.S. Surgeon General strongly encourage homeowners and rental property owners to test their properties for radon and make any necessary building repairs and modifications to reduce radon levels.

Radon is a radioactive gas that forms when naturally occurring uranium breaks down in the ground. Ordinarily, radon gas does not pose a threat to human health as it moves from the soil into the open air. However, as radon seeps up from the ground into enclosed buildings through basements and foundations, the gas can accumulate in dangerous concentrations. One out of every 15 U.S. homes has elevated radon concentrations. Certain regions of the country are more prone to high radon concentrations in the home, but any home in the United States can contain an unhealthy level of radon.

Simple radon testing devices are available at very low cost (under \$15) or, in some places, provided free by health departments. The cost of fixing a radon problem in an existing home ranges from \$800 to \$2,500, with an average cost of \$1,200. The typical mitigation involves ventilating air from basements and foundations to the exterior, and installing or repairing a vapor barrier between living space and the foundation. Many radon reduction systems reduce radon levels in the home by 99 percent.

Radon exposure is completely preventable in new construction. The nation's homebuilders and building code officials are encouraged to require radon-resistant safeguards in all new homes.

For more information on radon and how to prevent exposure in the home, see www.afhh.org/dah/dah_radon.htm.

###

The Alliance for Healthy Homes (www.afhh.org) is a national, nonprofit, public interest organization working to prevent and eliminate hazards in our homes that can harm the health of children, families, and other residents. These hazards include radon, lead, mold, carbon monoxide, pests, and pesticides. The Alliance advocates for policies and builds community capacity to achieve primary prevention of health hazards, practical solutions to problems, environmental justice for all Americans, and asset preservation through the prevention of structural deterioration and loss of residential property value.