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CUT RADON MITIGATION COSTS AND RISK OF LUNG CANCER BY BUILDING NEW HOMES WITH RADON-RESISTANT FEATURES

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Radon is a gas that cannot be seen, smelled or tasted. It comes naturally from the earth and is a known carcinogen. Radon is a by-product of natural radioactive decay of uranium in soils and rocks. The gas is naturally found in the air we breathe and will enter a home or building through drains, cracks or holes in the foundation or basement. It is the second leading cause of lung cancer, after cigarette smoking, and accounts for more than 20,000 lung cancer deaths per year in the United States.

Monongalia County has a Radon Zone 1 classification by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) which means radon concentrations are above safe ranges. The EPA recommends that homes being constructed in a Radon Zone 1 area should install a radon-resistant system during construction. The typical basic radon-resistant system prevents a build-up of radon gas in the home by ventilating the structure using vent piping to remove the radon, this is called a passive system and costs between $250 and $750. For a builder, it is much less expensive to install a radon-resistant system during construction than fixing a radon problem identified later. If you are planning to install a radon-resistant system during construction you should contact an experienced person to help you determine which system is best for your new home.

Joseph Lawson, MCHD Sanitarian said, “The health department has been testing homes for Radon for over a year and have identified homes in Monongalia County that have measurable Radon levels. Some of these Radon levels have been high enough to require the installation of mitigation systems. A mitigation system is retrofitted into homes without radon reduction systems and costs to reduce radon are more expensive at this time. Installing a radon-resistant system during construction is not only cost effective but reduces the risk of lung cancer caused by Radon.” Mr. Lawson went on to recommend that you have your home or facility tested for Radon because testing is the only way to measure the presence of Radon.

The MCHD Environmental Health staff has been trained to test for high Radon levels and makes these tests available to the public, home inspectors and realtors. The test takes forty-eight hours and utilizes continuous Radon Measuring equipment.

For more information about Radon or to set up an appointment to have your home and/or business checked, call MCHD Environmental Health at 304-598-5131 or visit our website at WWW.MONCHD.ORG