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New Law to Help Renters Learn More About Radon Levels in Their Homes

Radon is Second-Leading Cause of Lung Cancer

SPRINGFIELD – A new law set to go into effect on Jan. 1, 2012, will help people who rent apartments, condominiums or houses access information about radon levels in their homes. The Illinois Emergency Management Agency's (IEMA) radon program is offering guidance to help renters better understand radon hazards and their rights under this new law.

“About one-third of all housing in Illinois is rented,” said IEMA Director Jonathon Monken. “This new law will help renters find out if their landlords have already tested for radon and, if so, what levels were detected. For units where no testing has been done, we hope more renters will be proactive and get their homes tested. Radon is one health risk that can be easily reduced. Testing your home is the important first step.”

Public Act 97-0021, which was approved by the Illinois General Assembly this spring and signed by Gov. Quinn on June 28, 2011, requires owners of rental units to inform renters in writing before a lease is signed if the rental space has been tested for radon and that a radon hazard may exist. If the rental unit hasn't been tested, a renter can conduct a do-it-yourself radon test or ask the owner to test by hiring a licensed radon contractor. If a renter conducts a radon test in the rental unit and results show high radon levels, the renter should inform the building owner in writing.

IEMA recommends that all rental units below the third floor be tested for radon.

Radon is a colorless, odorless, tasteless radioactive gas that comes from the radioactive decay of naturally occurring uranium in the soil. Radon is the second-leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S., and the leading cause among non-smokers. It's estimated that nearly 1,200 radon-related lung cancer deaths occur each year in Illinois.

The USEPA has established 4.0 picocuries per liter of air (pCi/L) as the action level for radon. It is estimated that the risk of developing lung cancer at that level is about seven lung cancer deaths per 1,000 persons. The USEPA and IEMA recommend taking steps to reduce radon levels if test results indicate levels of 4.0 pCi/L or above.

High radon levels can be reduced with a properly-installed radon reduction system. If mitigation measures are necessary, the building owner should hire an IEMA-licensed radon contractor to perform the work.

IEMA has developed a brochure, *Radon Guide for Tenants*, to provide renters with more information about radon and how they can learn more about the levels of radon in their homes. The guide and additional information about radon hazards, testing and lists of licensed radon measurement and mitigation contractors can be found at www.radon.Illinois.gov. Information is also available by call 217-782-1325.