

Test for radon, reduce your risk of lung cancer

Susan Howe

As the weather cools, families spend more time indoors, and they could increase their risk for getting lung cancer. With winter weather, radon, a naturally occurring radioactive gas, can enter homes and accumulate to dangerous levels, raising the risk of lung cancer in their home.

Lung cancer kills more people than any other cancer and radon is estimated to cause 21,000 of those deaths yearly in the U.S. Once diagnosed with lung cancer, there is only a 15 percent five-year survival rate.

Radon is a health risk in Nevada, where 25 percent of tested homes have elevated radon concentrations in excess of the Environmental Protection Agency action level. Recognizing that radon is a pre-

ventable source of lung cancer, the Nevada Comprehensive Cancer Control Program, Nevada Cancer Coalition and its partner organizations and coalitions deemed that radon strategies be added to the primary prevention section of the 2016-2020 Nevada Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan. The plan provides a road map focused on improving systems and policies to prevent disease and ultimately save lives. One of the eight primary prevention goals is to decrease the average radon concentration within the state by five percent by 2020.

"This is the first time strategies to decrease radon exposure have been included in the statewide plan for cancer control," said Lily Helzer, coordinator of the Comprehensive Cancer Control Program. "Limiting radon exposure in homes



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Jamie Roice-Gomes, radon education coordinator at University of Nevada Cooperative Extension, gives a presentation.

throughout Nevada will greatly assist in decreasing the devastating effects of lung cancer statewide."

Reducing the risk of radon-caused lung cancer can only happen through education, as Nevada lacks any specific protective statutes or regulations

concerning radon. University of Nevada Cooperative Extension's Radon Education Program educates Nevadans about the radon health risk and how to test for and fix radon problems, and distributes low-cost test kits to residents. The simple test can determine if a

home has a radon problem or a possible problem.

"Testing a home for radon and fixing it if a radon problem is found will lower the risk for radon-caused lung cancer," Susan Howe, program director, Nevada Radon Education Program said.

Oct. 18-24 is National Radon Action Week and University of Nevada Cooperative Extension's Radon Education Program offers educational radon presentations and encourages all homes be tested for radon.

For more information about radon and the Nevada Radon Education Program, contact Howe at 775-336-0248, visit www.RadonNV.com or call the Radon Hotline at 888-723-6610).

Susan Howe is the radon program director with University of Nevada Cooperative Extension.