Indoor Radon Program: Preventing Cancer Deaths

Radon is a cancer-causing, radioactive gas. It is estimated to cause 22,000 deaths each year in the United States. It is the leading cause of lung cancer in non-smokers. It is estimated that one in three homes in Utah have elevated levels of radon.

In October 1990, the Utah Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) became home to the Utah Indoor Radon Program. DEQ has been the leader in increasing radon awareness, testing homes, mitigating homes, building homes with radon resistant new construction in Utah for the past 26 years. DEQ has been collecting data on completed radon test kits since 1990 and has radon levels for over 50,000 Utah residences.

The goal of the indoor radon program is to have every home tested for radon and if elevated levels exist to have a radon mitigation system installed. The cost to mitigate is $1200-$1500 and is relatively easy.

For the past 3 years the Indoor Radon Program has received legislative funding for educational campaigns: $25,000 for FY 2014/15, 2015/16 and $150,000 for FY 2016/17.

Other radon efforts include educating realtors about radon and requiring disclosure within real estate transactions; developing coalitions with local governments and partnering with affiliates and City Councils to increase knowledge and testing in all areas of the state.

DEQ’s Indoor Radon Program has a longstanding cooperative alliance with IHC Hospitals throughout the state with its Baby Radon Program. Other valuable partnerships include the Utah Department of Health (Utah Cancer Action Network), Local Health Departments, American Cancer Society, American Lung Association, CanSAR, Utah Safety Council, Green and Healthy Homes, Huntsman Cancer Institute, Habitat for Humanity, and various community groups such as Boy Scouts of America and local schools.