

EPA Warns of Cancer Danger from Radon in Homes and Schools

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WASHINGTON – January is National Radon Action Month, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is touting three initiatives to raise awareness about the risks of radon. Radon is a colorless, odorless, radioactive gas that can exist at dangerous levels in homes, schools and other buildings. An estimated 20,000 people die every year in the U.S. from radon-related lung cancer.

This year EPA is highlighting three events: the winners of the National Radon Poster Contest, new global guidance from the World Health Organization (WHO), and a new video outreach campaign.

Three middle school students are being honored for their award-winning posters illustrating radon's risk. First-place winner of the National Radon Poster Contest is Alec Smith, an eighth grader at Guthrie Junior High School (Guthrie, Okla.); second-place winner is Emily Pinnock, an eighth grader at Olympus Junior High (Holladay, Utah); and third-place winner is Noah Jermain, an eighth grader at Savannah Middle School (Savannah, Mo.).

"The National Radon Poster Contest is a great way to teach students and parents about the dangers of radon," said Gina McCarthy, assistant administrator for EPA's Office of Air and Radiation. "Testing and fixing homes for radon helps save lives in communities across the country."

Last September, EPA joined the World Health Organization's first global call-to-action on cancer risk from radon. WHO's Handbook on Indoor Radon represents collaboration by 30 countries seeking to understand and overcome the risks posed by radon while demonstrating the consensus that radon is a global public health risk. The WHO guidance is intended to help countries establish or expand radon programs.

In addition, EPA has initiated several video public service announcement campaigns including "Eddie's Story", about lung cancer survivor Eddie Metcalfe. It was the winning entry in the EPA's radon video contest in 2008.

National Radon Action Month brings together partners both inside and outside government to host special events across the country to increase awareness of radon and promote risk-reducing behavior. Partners include state, local and tribal radon programs, radon professionals in the private sector, real estate

professionals and builders, and health care professionals and advocacy groups.

EPA has been raising public awareness of radon for more than 20 years and radon preventive actions have saved an estimated 6,000 lives from radon-induced lung cancer.

More information on radon: <http://www.epa.gov/radon> or call 1-800-SOS-RADON (767-7236).