

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

October 23, 2013

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

RADON ... Is There Something Lurking In Your Basement?

Coldwater. Is there something lurking in your basement? Something silent....Something invisible....Something deadly! Halloween is right around the corner, and soon the streets will be flooded with little ghosts and goblins out trick or treating! And while all of us enjoy a “good scare” -- there is a real danger that could be lurking right in your own home and posing a real health threat to you and your family... Radon!

Radon is an invisible, odorless, tasteless radioactive gas that comes from the natural breakdown of uranium in soil, rock and water. It causes no immediate symptoms but is the number one cause of lung cancer among non-smokers and kills more than 21,000 each year in the United States. Nationally, it is estimated that nearly one of every 15 homes has an elevated radon level. Within Branch, Hillsdale and St. Joseph Counties, that number is expected to be much higher. According to Air Check, more than one of every three homes in the tri-county health jurisdiction has elevated radon above the acceptable level set by the EPA.

As a gas in the soil, radon enters buildings through small openings in the foundation. Since the building can hold the radon similarly to smoke trapped under a glass, indoor radon concentrations can increase to many times that of outdoor levels. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends that homes be fixed if the radon level is 4 picocuries per liter of air (4pCi/L) or above.

Testing for radon is easy and free through the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency. Rebecca Burns, EH Director for the health department states “Testing is the only way to know if your home has elevated radon levels. It is free and easy. Simply pick up the test kit from your county health department office, place it

in the lowest level of your home for three to seven days. Take the test kit, and using the pre-paid postage mailer provided, send the test in. You should have your results in seven to ten business days.” The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency maintains offices in each county and is open, Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.:

Branch County	Hillsdale County	St. Joseph County
570 N. Marshall Rd.	20 Care Drive	1110 Hill Street
Coldwater, MI 49036	Hillsdale, MI	Three Rivers, MI
517-279-9561	517-437-7395	269-273-2161

Once you have your test results, addressing high radon levels can be accomplished often for the same cost as other minor home repairs. The health department can assist you in finding a trained radon contractor and/or provide you with information about the types of techniques used to reduce radon exposure. “The health department’s website has a link to listings of radon contractors who can help you decide the best radon reduction system to put into place, given the type of foundation your home is built upon,” says Rebecca Burns.

October 20th to 26th is National Radon Awareness Month. The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency wants to remind residents, as they close up their homes to prepare for winter, to take time to test their homes for radon. After all, radon doesn’t have to be scary! To learn more about radon, visit our website at www.bhsj.org and click on the Frequently Asked Questions!

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