

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

January 16, 2014

Contact: Steve Todd, Health Officer

517-279-9561, ext. 148

Rebecca Burns, Environmental Health Director

269-273-2161, ext. 228

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January is Radon Action Month

Coldwater, MI. January is Radon Action Month, yet many people don't know what radon is, let alone how to protect themselves from it? Radon is an odorless, tasteless, radioactive gas that occurs naturally in soil and rock. Radon is usually diluted and travels up into the atmosphere and causes no damage. It gets trapped in our homes, coming in through cracks and leaks. Yet, when inhaled over time, radon can lead to lung cancer. In fact, it is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S. and the leading cause among non-smokers. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reports that exposure to radon results in more than 21,000 lung cancer deaths each year and over 600 in Michigan. The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency indicates that radon is especially prominent in the tri-counties, which means -- you could be at risk.

According to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, the average national indoor radon level is 1.3 pCi/L (picocuries per liter) and the average predicted indoor radon screening level for homes in the tri-county area is greater than 4 pCi/L (picocuries per liter). According to Rebecca Burns, Environmental Health Director for the tri-county health department "Branch, Hillsdale and St. Joseph Counties are located within a nine-county section of the state that is considered to contain the highest level of radon. This high concentration is due to five specific factors:

1. indoor radon measurements;
2. geology;

- 3.aerial radioactivity;
- 4.soil permeability; and
- 5.foundation type.”

Rebecca Burns adds “While knowing the area contains high levels of radon is useful for targeting resources and deciding if radon-resistant building codes are needed, it only tells a part of the story. There are homes that contain elevated levels of radon in all areas of the state and there are homes in the tri-counties that have acceptable levels of radon. Testing your home is the only reliable way to know your radon exposure.”

Testing is easy and free. Radon testing kits are available through the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency. Place the test kit in the lowest level of the home where people live for three to four days. Return the kit using the self-addressed prepaid mailer. Results are directly mailed to you. It’s that simple!

Remember: there are no warning signs associated with high radon levels, so it is vital that every home is tested. Because the test requires the home to be closed up, it is best to do test during colder weather months when doors and windows are kept closed. For more information on radon, visit our website at www.bhsj.org. To pick up a free testing kit, stop in at one of our three county office locations:

Branch County
570 N. Marshall Rd.
Coldwater, MI 49036
(517) 279-9561

Hillsdale County
20 Care Drive
Hillsdale, MI 49242
(517) 437-7395

Three Rivers
1110 Hill St.
Three Rivers, MI 49093
(269) 273-2161

###