

PROJECT BACKGROUNDER – RADON TESTING PROJECT

PROJECT SYNOPSIS

A Radon Testing Project being conducted by Shared Services BC (SSBC) will be completed in the fall and winter of 2015/2016 in buildings owned, managed and leased by SSBC.

In 2007 Health Canada established a health guideline of 200 Bq/m³, above which action is recommended to reduce occupant exposure levels. The Radon Testing Project will begin in a sample of government owned, leased and managed residential and commercial buildings to test for radon and to determine any requirement for mitigation.

WHAT IS RADON?

Radon is a colourless, odourless, tasteless gas produced by the radioactive decay of naturally occurring uranium. Uranium-bearing rocks and soils decay into radon gas, which migrates from underground to the surface of the earth where it is normally diluted with fresh air to very low concentrations. However, radon can also find its way into any building where the foundation is in direct contact with the soil. Indoors, radon can get trapped and accumulate to much higher concentrations. The only way to know if a building has high levels of radon is to test.

WHY IS RADON A CONCERN?

Radon has been shown to cause lung cancer over many years of exposure and is estimated to be the second leading cause of lung cancer, after smoking. The only known health impact from radon exposure is lung cancer.

WHEN AND HOW WILL TESTING BE CONDUCTED?

Radon testing is scheduled to begin in the fall of 2015. Occupants will be provided with written notice 2 days prior to testing. The radon detectors will be placed by a professional environmental consultant according to a testing protocol developed by SSBC and the BC Lung Association using Health Canada guidelines. The following guidelines will be used for all buildings in the project:

1. A three month test period with passive radon detectors that do not have power requirements and **do not emit radon**.
2. Only occupied buildings (where occupied is defined as greater than 4 hours per day) will be tested.
3. Residential buildings will deploy a single detector, while larger, commercial buildings may require several tests located in various occupied locations.
4. All detectors will be placed away from forced air ductwork, ceiling fans, direct sunlight, electrical influences, and high humidity.
5. Areas not to be tested include: bathrooms, kitchens, closets, hallways, utility rooms and unoccupied warehouses.
6. Detectors will remain in the same location, undisturbed, for the duration of the testing period.



Figure 1: Long term radon detector



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7. Detectors will be labelled.
8. The certified radon testing consultant will retrieve all the radon detectors, and ship them to a certified lab for analysis.

Once testing is complete, and lab results known, they will be provided to SSBC and Facilities Management Units. Tenants will be notified of the results once they have been reviewed. In the interim, if you require additional information or have any concerns you can visit www.radonaware.ca contact your Facilities Management Unit or email the Public Service Agency at myhr@gov.bc.ca