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Commissioner



Department of
Natural Resources

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Anchorage, Alaska

STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: January 30, 2020

Online map helps Alaskans track radon hazards

(Fairbanks, AK) – Alaskans concerned about the possible presence of radioactive, cancer-causing radon gas in their homes can assess the risks through an online radon mapping project partnership between the Department of Natural Resources and University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer deaths in America, and claims the lives of more than 21,000 Americans each year. Radon is a naturally occurring gas that is generated in the earth and can seep up and concentrate in buildings, and is considered an under-recognized health risk by Alaska's Division of Public Health.

The Alaska Radon Database project is a partnership between the Alaska Division of Geological & Geophysical Surveys (DGGS) and the University of Alaska Fairbanks' (UAF) Cooperative Extension Service. Together, they have produced a map, available at maps.dggs.alaska.gov/radon/, showing potential radon concentrations drawn from statistically combined results of indoor home tests. It can also display predictions of where radon may exist, based on known test results, uranium in soils and sediments, mapped geologic units, and depth to ground water or permafrost.

While the map shows where radon may occur, indoor radon concentrations can vary greatly from building to building. Testing is the only way to know for sure whether a home has radon concentrations above the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Action Level of 4 picocuries per liter.

January is National Radon Action Month, and DGGS and UAF have given away all 1,300 radon testing kits allocated to Alaska through an EPA grant to the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation's Division of Air Quality. Results from those tests will help improve the quality of the online map. Those unable to secure a free test kit during recent public information sessions or workshops may buy inexpensive testing kits on their own from most home improvement stores or online vendors.

(MORE)

For more information about the online map, radon testing and building repair, or participation in the Alaska Radon Database project, contact project leads Jennifer Athey (DGGGS), 907-451-5028, jennifer.athey@alaska.gov or Art Nash (UAF) at 907-474-6366, alnashjr@alaska.edu, or call the toll-free Alaska radon hotline, 1-800-478-8324.

Additional information on radon in Alaska is available from DGGGS at dgggs.alaska.gov/hazards/radon.html, and UAF at www.uaf.edu/ces/foodhealth/radon/.

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