Sample

# Op-Ed and Letter to the Editor

## Write an Op-Ed or Letter to the Editor

A well-written op-ed or letter to the editor can raise awareness in your community by helping readers understand what they can do to prevent exposure to radon. Write an op-ed when you want to introduce radon issues to your community and/or describe a personal experience with radon. An op-ed is your opinion and should be written to grab the reader's attention and deliver an accurate message. Op-eds can vary in length between 400-750 words long. You can write a letter to the editor when you want to respond to the publication's coverage of radon or add a different perspective on related topics. A letter to the editor is shorter than an op-ed, usually 150-200 words. Here are some tips on submitting an op-ed or letter to the editor:

- Personalize your submission. It will be more compelling to the editors and the readers if your submission resonates with your community.
- Include your contact information when submitting your op-ed or letter—include your address, phone number, and e-mail.
- Initially, send your op-ed or letter to just your first choice publication. Wait a few days after submission and follow up with a phone call to gauge interest. If the publication has decided not to run your op-ed or letter, go ahead and submit it to another publication.
- Always follow-up with a phone call a few days after submitting your op-ed or letter. If your writing is rejected, ask editors what was lacking in your piece so that you can revise or be better prepared for the next submission opportunity.

The following letter to the editor is an example of how you can respond to a publication's coverage of relevant topics in order to highlight your radon message. The op-ed on page 29 can be used as a template and you can personalize your own introduction.

## Sample Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Thank you for notifying the community about the threat of asbestos near the site of the demolished paint plant ("Asbestos Poses Threat," January 21). However, your article failed to note that our area is already at a high risk for cancer caused by a dangerous gas.

Townsville is described by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as an at-risk area for elevated radon levels. Radon is a gas that can seep into buildings from the earth, accumulate, and pose a substantial health risk. It is estimated that 20,000 people die in the U.S. each year from radon-related cancer.

Easy, inexpensive testing options are available for homes and businesses to see if you are at risk. While high-profile health risks are certainly big news, please continue to educate the community on the easily preventable risk of living with prolonged radon exposure.

My organization will be holding an event on January 30 at the Marie Williams Community Center to promote awareness of this serious threat, and we will be offering coupons for reduced priced radon test kits.

Thank you,

Jane Doe
Radon Campaign Organizer

# Sample Op-ed *(continued)*

**TOO MANY THINGS THREATEN OUR HEALTH — DON'T LET RADON TAKE ITS TOLL**

**Intro Example One (Individual):**
As a man in his late 40s, it seems like there's always some new threat to my health. High blood pressure, heart disease, and prostate problems have begun to plague my friends and colleagues. Luckily, one health threat in our community is easy to detect and reduce exposure: Radon.

**Intro Example Two (Organization):**
Seatbelts. Sunscreen. Low-sodium diets. There are many actions that we can take to stay safe and healthy. Some of them, like cutting back on chocolate cake and carefree days under the sun, require a little bit of sacrifice. Others, like quitting smoking, can require a huge amount of effort. But there's one big action we can take to help protect our health that requires very little effort or sacrifice: radon testing.

**Body:**
Radon exposure kills an estimated 20,000 people in the U.S. each year—a number that could be dramatically reduced by easy, inexpensive home testing and repair.

Radon is a naturally occurring, radioactive gas that can accumulate in your home and can cause cancer in you and your children. Radon usually comes from the surrounding soil and can enter through cracks and openings on the lower levels of your home.

Many people don't know about radon because you can't see, smell, or taste it. But exposure to radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States and the number one cause of lung cancer among non-smokers. Although lung cancer can be treated, the survival rate is one of the lowest for those with cancer.

Radon levels vary around the country, but no home is free from risk. The only way to know if you are at risk for radon exposure is to test your home. Conducting a radon test is as easy as opening a package, placing the detector in a designated area, and after a set number of days, sending the detector back to the lab for analysis. Many kits are available at your local hardware store for under $25. If your home does have an elevated level of radon, a qualified radon mitigation contractor can make repairs to solve the problem and protect your family.

The U.S. Surgeon General recognizes radon as a health risk and recommends that all homes across the country be tested for radon. Testing your home, and making repairs if necessary, is a small price to pay for the health of your loved ones. The world is full of unknowns and potential hazards like radon, but thankfully, we can eliminate it before it can hurt us. Life is short enough—don't let something as easy to fix as radon make it even shorter.