

# Ideas for Radon Outreach Activities

January is National Radon Action Month—a perfect time to promote radon awareness, testing and mitigation, and radon resistant new construction (RRNC). Radon testing is generally easiest and most effective in cooler weather months when houses tend to be closed up for warmth.

Organizations just like yours are spreading the word about this preventable health risk. Find inspiration from a sample of their events listed below. Consider contacting your state radon program for help in planning your activities. You can find contact information for your state program at [www.epa.gov/iaq/whereyoulive.html](http://www.epa.gov/iaq/whereyoulive.html).

## Choosing the Right Activities

Unsure how to start planning your radon outreach activities? The following questions can help direct you to the right activities for your organization and your community.

- ▶ **1. Are you looking to form new partnerships or seeking to mobilize your existing partners?** Read **section 1** for tips about fostering effective coalitions.
- ▶ **2. Are you aware of important opinion leaders in your community?** **Section 2** contains ideas for how to engage them in spreading the word about radon.
- ▶ **3. Looking for new ideas to jazz up your community events?** Learn what other groups have tried in their communities in **section 3**.
- ▶ **4. Does your group seek to reach families and children with messages about radon?** If so, read **section 4** for tips on working with youth.
- ▶ **5. Do you seek to reach a wide audience with specific key messages?** Consider implementing a media campaign. Check out **section 5** for tips on working with the media.
- ▶ **6. Are you looking to raise awareness in the workplace?** **Section 6** can help you communicate effectively in the work environment.

## 1. Energize Your Partners and Stakeholders

### **Build a Radon Coalition in Your Community**

There are many individuals and organizations in your community that have an interest in health topics. Hold an open forum for interested individuals to attend and then establish a coalition to promote radon awareness in your community. Every member of your coalition will have unique ideas for radon activities and will have access to different parts of your community. Working together as a group will be the most effective way to make radon testing and mitigation a reality in all buildings in your community.

### **Recognize Radon Champions**

If you already have a radon coalition, National Radon Action Month is an excellent opportunity to recognize your partners for their hard work. Host an awards ceremony to honor exceptional radon advocates. Use the opportunity to inspire and energize your radon partners.

### **Ask Local Chapters of Health and Environmental Organizations to Promote Radon Awareness**

Many local organizations in your community have regular newsletters, listservs, or mailings that they use to reach their members. Contact them to ask them to run an article on radon health risk, testing, mitigation, and radon resistant new construction. Be sure to include information on how to obtain additional radon information.

Please see pages 11 and 17 of this Kit for information on obtaining radon test kits and ordering customizable test kit coupons for tracking your activities.

## Ideas for Radon Outreach Activities *(continued)*

### **Host a Radon Training Workshop**

Provide continuing education for key professionals such as homebuilders, real estate professionals, and environmental health professionals. Successful programs have included lunch and learn seminars, training courses for governmental housing officials, and meetings about radon resistant new construction.

## **2. Engage Community Leaders**

### **Ask Your Mayor or City Council to Issue a Radon Proclamation**

Invite your elected officials to proclaim January as "Radon Action Month." Encourage all community members to test for radon. Tips for working with local officials and a sample proclamation that you can customize are included in this Event Planning Kit on page 30.

### **Ask Community Leaders to Spread the Word about Radon**

Churches, community centers, even local beauty salons and barbershops, can be effective venues for reaching out to your community. Contact ministers, community leaders, and local civic leaders and encourage them to conduct radon outreach to their members. Provide them with educational materials and information on test kits to make it easy for them to partner with you.

### **Work with Health Advocates and Educators**

Coordinate with your local health care providers and other health-focused groups, such as the American Lung Association, to have booths, educational sessions, and presentations on radon. Invite your mayor or other officials to your event to issue a proclamation and to conduct a press event.

### **Connect with Local Businesses**

Home improvement and hardware stores may carry radon test kits. Encourage them to promote radon testing in homes, schools, and other buildings. Ask them to create radon test kit displays in prominent store locations during National Radon Action Month and to include information on radon testing in mailings or other advertisements during January.

### **Contact Your Local University Medical Schools and Health Care Professionals**

Health care students and practitioners can serve as speakers for your health fairs and community events. You can also work with health care providers to incorporate radon messages into their practices and provide educational materials for their patients. See page 4 for New York State's experience interacting with health care professionals.

### **Coordinate with Your Local Utilities to Promote Radon Awareness and Testing**

Send a bill insert to your local utility providers (e.g. water, gas, electric) and ask them to include it with their January bill statement mailings. This is an easy, effective, and inexpensive way to reach the vast majority of your community. For an example of reaching out to non-traditional stakeholders, see page 25 for Tennessee's experience.



### **Collaborate with Experts from the Radon Professionals Speaker's Bureau**

Coordinate with the American Association of Radon Scientists and Technologists, Inc. (AARST) for your community activities. You can contact local radon experts from the Radon Professionals Speaker's Bureau (through the National Radon Proficiency Program) to participate in your event as a speaker, conduct a radon test demonstration, or field questions from the media. AARST has the following Speaker's Bureau lists available:

#### **Radon Professionals Speaker's**

**Bureau:** An extensive database of radon testers, mitigators, and other industry professionals across the country who are available for speaking opportunities. All experts have completed the National Radon Proficiency Program. View the list at: [www.radongas.org/speaker.htm](http://www.radongas.org/speaker.htm).

**AARST Key Radon Subject Experts:** A list of selected national experts who are available to speak about radon science and health risk. View the list at: [www.aarst.org/key\\_radonscience\\_speakers](http://www.aarst.org/key_radonscience_speakers).

If you have additional questions or requests for coordinating with AARST during National Radon Action Month, please send an e-mail to: [director@aarst.com](mailto:director@aarst.com).

## Reaching Out to Physicians and Pediatricians

Nikolas Webster, of New York State's (NYS) Bureau of Environmental Radiation Protection at the New York State Department of Health (DOH), initiated an innovative program for National Radon Action Month. He began a program for doctors dedicated to raising radon awareness among family physicians and pediatricians. He wanted to reach areas that he and his staff are unable to personally visit. He believes that if the importance of radon safety is communicated in a face-to-face manner by a scientific source within the community, the message will be more likely to get across to community members.

In June of 2007, Nikolas began collecting contact information for physicians in high risk counties by utilizing a database within the NYS DOH Web site. He developed a NYS DOH tri-fold brochure highlighting the risks of radon exposure. He then wrote a cover letter to physicians, asking if they would be interested in his National Radon Action Month program which is trying to increase public awareness. In early December 2007, he and several voluntary staff members in his office began to mail out over 3,000 thousand packets containing the physicians guide, the NYS DOH tri-fold, an application for a test kit, and the letter.

About a week and a half after the letter went out, he started getting responses, and was invited to give a talk about radon at St. Clare's Medical hospital in Schenectady County in April, 2008. During the talk he asked physicians if they ever talked about radon with their patients, and he provided examples to emphasize that patients would be more likely to take the risks of radon exposure seriously if the information was delivered directly by their doctor, rather than via a pamphlet. His talk drew the Director of Family Medicine at the hospital, who was interested in continuing to reach out to and inform new residents. The Director and Nikolas are currently trying to schedule a yearly presentation for all new residents of the hospital.

Nikolas' talk was also effective in another way; people in the community were responsive. His office received many calls asking questions about radon and test kits. When asked where they received their information, callers let him know they had received it from their doctor. He cited one woman in particular as an example, who requested a kit and found radon levels of over 100 pCi/L in her home, far above the EPA action level of 4 pCi/L. She subsequently ordered two more test kits to confirm her results, and then had her home mitigated. Taking it one step further, she contacted her children's school to see if they would test for radon—demonstrating how one person can affect a whole community.

Since January 2008, he has kept in contact with the doctors, asking them to update their contact information and checking to see if they would like more application packets. Instrumental to the success of this project was the tracking and evaluation of how many packets were sent out, and the results that came back. The radon test kit applications sent back into the office had been assigned a special code so they were able to be tracked.

For January 2009, Nikolas plans to continue with the projects from National Radon Action Month 2008, and to look for more avenues to reach even more physicians and pediatricians in a face-to-face capacity by attending local county chapter meetings of physicians' professional organizations. He would also like to try to involve counties who receive money through State Indoor Radon Grants to expand his efforts, and to engage local county officials to generate proclamations to stress the importance of radon risk and testing.

Nikolas offers two key suggestions for anyone interested in implementing similar projects:

- ▶ Allow a sufficient amount of time if you plan to make your own information packets.
- ▶ Get out into the field and interface directly with people because personal interaction is a more effective way of delivering your message.

The following link provides a PDF version of the NYS DOH tri-fold brochure: <http://www.health.state.ny.us/publications/3168.pdf> (English/Spanish).

## Ideas for Radon Outreach Activities *(continued)*

### 3. Take Your Message to the Community

#### Arrange a Display at Local Sporting Events

Set up a booth or display near a concession stand or ticket window and distribute radon educational materials and test kit coupons. Work with the sporting venue to show radon Public Service Announcements (PSAs) during half-time or other breaks in play. Visit [www.epapsa.com](http://www.epapsa.com) to view and order the PSAs.



#### Display Radon Information at Public Gathering Places

Libraries, community centers, malls, and transit centers frequented by members of your community are perfect locations to provide radon education and testing materials. Supply these locations with radon materials and ask them to display the materials in a prominent location. Be sure to check back with these locations frequently and provide them with additional materials if necessary.



#### Provide Radon Education at Home and Garden Events

Incorporate radon resistant construction techniques into special events with a home and garden theme. Groups have promoted National Radon Action Month at a green house or eco-house exhibit at state fairs, green building shows, lawn and patio, and landscape shows. Work with exhibit organizers to provide outreach and educational materials for visitors.

#### Coordinate with Welcome Wagon or Other New Home Programs

Your community may have a welcome wagon or other programs to welcome new residents. Provide these programs with brochures and test kit coupons to include with welcome packages for new residents. Be sure to include information about your coalition or program so that individuals can follow up with you if they have questions.

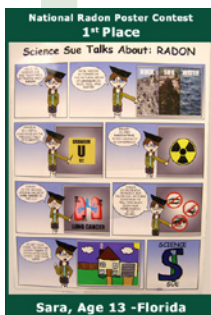
#### Use Direct Mail Effectively

Bring your radon message directly to people's homes. Send test kit coupons to new parents or radon brochures to new homeowners in your community. Target your list of names to the groups you most want to reach and design attractive materials to attract their attention.

### 4. Reach Children and their Families

#### Hold a Radon Poster Contest and Awards Ceremony

The National Safety Council conducts an annual radon poster contest during the radon testing season. Start early and work with your local school(s) to get students to design radon posters. For more information on the National Safety Council radon poster contest, visit [www.nsc.org/issues/radon](http://www.nsc.org/issues/radon). You can also hold an awards ceremony for poster contest winners in your community. Please see page 13 for more information on holding a radon poster contest awards ceremony.



#### Provide Creative Radon Education Programs

Involve science students in conducting radon measurements. Sponsor educational events in 4 H or other special classes. Offer incentives such as t-shirts or parties for participating. Contact school leaders in your community to arrange special radon events for students.

#### Conduct a Radon Test Challenge

Challenges are a fun way to encourage testing within your community. Contact a radon test kit manufacturer (a list can be obtained from your state radon office) to obtain test kits, possibly at a discounted price, and offer a challenge and "reward" for the most test kits distributed, conducted, and sent to the lab for analysis. Challenges can be conducted between cities (have your mayor challenge a neighboring community) or within your community (have schools in your community challenge each other). However you conduct your challenge, offer a "reward" for the challenge winner, but also acknowledge all participants. Check your state laws on contests before planning your radon test challenge.

## Ideas for Radon Outreach Activities *(continued)*

### **Host a Community Baby Shower**

Many communities conduct community baby showers or other events for new or expectant mothers. This is a perfect opportunity to provide families in your community with information about a variety of health topics, including the importance of testing for radon. Provide educational materials and a test kit coupon to all attendees.

## 5. Work with the Media to Promote Radon Awareness

### **Promote Radon Public Service Announcements (PSAs)**

EPA has a variety of print, radio, and television PSAs available at no cost to educate your community about the dangers of radon and the importance of radon testing. Hand delivering PSAs to your local media outlets is an effective way to reach large portions of your community, and often stations will run PSAs for free! Partnering with your local movie theater provides another opportunity to showcase the radon PSAs before the feature film. Lastly, consider contacting your state broadcast association for help in getting the PSAs aired. Keep in mind that people in your community may speak languages other than English, so be sure to use EPA's bi-lingual materials and reach out to media outlets that serve non-English speaking audiences. Visit [www.epapsa.com](http://www.epapsa.com) to view and order PSA materials.

### **Make Your Own Radon PSA**

You can also create your own local radon PSA. Local news celebrities like meteorologists, radio personalities, and sports anchors will sometimes record PSAs about a worthy cause at their own facilities as a public service. Approach the advertising department of local TV and radio stations to ask if their broadcast personalities could record a short radon announcement for the station to air throughout the radon testing season.

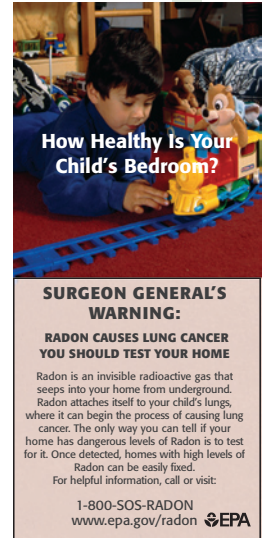
Once a local station has agreed to record the PSA with their talent and dedicate airtime to the PSA, write a short script for the PSA. It should be brief, containing local references and key radon messages. Work with the station's advertising department to make sure that your script's length matches the available free airtime slot (i.e., 15 to 30 seconds).

Tailor the PSA script to match the type of local celebrity you've secured. For instance, for a local sports anchor in Chicago, your script might look like this:

*Hey Bears fans! Winter is time for playoffs, but it's also the best time to test your home for radon. Radon is a naturally occurring gas that can build up to a dangerous level in your home. It can cause lung cancer, and it causes about 20,000 deaths each year. Buy a radon test kit at a hardware store today and make sure you're not at risk. Visit [www.xyz.com](http://www.xyz.com) or call 555-555-5555 for more information.*

### **Conduct a Media Campaign**

In addition to promoting PSAs, contact your local media and ask them to run stories on radon during the radon testing season. Provide the media with fact sheets and other background materials and offer spokespeople for interviews. See page 21 of this Event Planning Kit for information on working with the media.



**Radon Action Week is  
October 19-25, 2008**

Radon Action Week is traditionally the third full week in October. Consider ways to use both October and January to full advantage in support of your radon outreach efforts to the public and the media. For more information about Radon Action Week including additional radon outreach ideas, please visit [http://healthyindoorair.org/October\\_radon.htm](http://healthyindoorair.org/October_radon.htm).

## Ideas for Radon Outreach Activities *(continued)*

### **Develop a Compelling Local Story**

Give radon a face in your community. Invite the media to talk with people who have tested their homes and successfully mitigated a radon problem. Providing the media with local radon data (available from your state radon program or testing companies) will also help you localize the story for your community. Don't forget to provide information on test kit availability and qualified radon mitigation professionals in your community.

### **Identify Key Spokespeople in Your Community**

Spokespeople can serve as recognizable and respected "faces" for your radon program. Perhaps you can engage local politicians, celebrities, scientists, or others that people in your community recognize and trust. Use your spokespeople for media interviews and to publicize your radon activities. Encourage your spokespeople to publicly test their homes for radon and publicize their results and subsequent actions if their tests show radon in excess of EPA's action level. You can also contact your state radon program to help identify radon technical experts if needed.

### **Write a Press Release**

Write a press release about radon and your radon activities and distribute it to your local media outlets. A sample press release that you can customize for your community is included in this Event Planning Kit on pages 26-27.

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

Write a letter to the editor of your local paper(s) to educate your community about the health risks of radon and to encourage people to test their homes. Tips for writing an op-ed and letter to the editor and a sample op-ed that you can customize for your community are located on pages 28-29.

## **Media and Mini-Grants Raise Radon Awareness**

To have a far reaching impact during 2008's National Radon Action Month, Steve Melia, from the Wyoming Department of Health, focused his activities around a media outreach campaign, along with the distribution of free, short-term radon test kits. Steve began by calling radio stations and requesting short interviews to explain the dangers of radon. While on the radio shows, he was able to inform the public that the state was offering free test kits throughout January in honor of National Radon Action Month. The local CBS television station and several radio stations aired the interviews multiple times and broadcasted stories about radon during the month of January.

Using the Internet as another outreach medium, Steve placed a radon link on the Wyoming Department of Health's Home Page to provide easy access to the Radon Web page containing a downloadable coupon for a free radon test kit. Members of the public could print out and mail in the coupon to receive their kit. As well as working with television, radio, and Internet, Steve also coordinated with the Governor's office to release a Governor's Proclamation for National Radon Action Month, as well as the Department's Public Information Office to issue several press releases.

The roughly 100 to 150 postal requests per day (totaling more than 4,000 requests) for a radon test kit reveal the community's overwhelmingly positive response to the campaign.

Taking his outreach campaign one step further, Steve made several mini-grants available to Wyoming science teachers to conduct radon projects with their science classes. He hopes to attract further media coverage to help spread his message about radon and the importance of radon testing.

Wyoming's National Radon Action Month 2008 Press Release is available at:  
<http://wdh.state.wy.us/news.aspx?NewsID=140>.

## Ideas for Radon Outreach Activities *(continued)*

### 6. Put Radon Awareness to Work

During National Radon Action Month, you can play an important part in raising awareness in the workplace and promoting testing for radon among your colleagues by conducting a radon awareness and testing campaign in your workplace.

#### Get Employees' Attention

##### Through E-mail and Web sites:

- ▶ Send an e-mail message explaining radon and the risk of radon-induced lung cancer, and ask your employees to test their homes and mitigate their homes if radon is detected above the EPA action level. In the e-mail, you may refer them to Web sites where they can get more information about radon and reducing their risk from radon, such as your organization's Web site, your state radon or public health Web site, and the EPA's radon Web site at [www.epa.gov/radon/index.html](http://www.epa.gov/radon/index.html).
- ▶ Create a worksite radon testing campaign Web page on your intranet. This would contain links to the EPA's radon Web site, company events you have planned that are related to the campaign or local community radon events, information on where employees can obtain test kits, and recognition of action being taken as a result of your campaign (i.e., a goal tracker showing how many in your company have tested their homes for radon to date).

##### In Common Areas:

- ▶ Create flyers and hang them in high-traffic areas (e.g., kitchen, hallways, employee lounge, storeroom) to publicize the campaign.
- ▶ Host a breakfast or lunch where an employee volunteer, a Human Resources representative, or a community/state expert presents the basic risks of radon and what action can be taken to reduce the risk of radon. Use EPA's National Radon Action Month PowerPoint presentation template to create your presentation. Then, distribute EPA's fact sheets for audience members to take home. Consider customizing the PowerPoint, factsheets, and other resources in the Event Planning Kit to the audience and your organization by editing content, adding your organization's logo, personalizing contact information, and more. This could be combined with other health promotion initiatives taking place in your workplace.
- ▶ If your company has any smoking cessation effort, make sure to include information on radon and the higher associated risks of cancer for smokers.

#### Get Employees to Take Action

##### By Making it Easy:

- ▶ Consider including customized coupons for test kits in paycheck envelopes, paystubs, or mailboxes. Coupons can be customized with codes to track their use, providing you with results of your efforts. Your organization can obtain customizable radon test kit coupons from the National Safety Council at <http://downloads.nsc.org/pdf/Coupon2008.pdf>. For more information about the NSC test kit coupon program, contact Kristin Lolmaugh at [Kristin.Lolmaugh@nsc.org](mailto:Kristin.Lolmaugh@nsc.org).

##### By Motivating:

- ▶ Set a workplace-wide goal of having x% of employees test their homes. Encourage competition (inter-office, inter-group, or even an inter-office-floor contest) competition for the highest number of tested homes.

## Ideas for Radon Outreach Activities *(continued)*

- ▶ Motivate employees by recognizing their efforts and offering prizes for participation. For example, you could offer a complimentary radon mitigation if a home tests above the EPA action level (consider partnering with a local mitigator at [www.epa.gov/radon/radontest.html](http://www.epa.gov/radon/radontest.html) to possibly offset the cost of the mitigation). “Green” or “healthy home” products such as non-toxic cleaning products, window sealing kits, energy saving light bulbs, or other practical products are also good prizes.

### By Making it Fun

- ▶ Ask parents in your workplace to get their children involved by participating in the National Radon Poster Contest for children ages 9-14 (visit at [www.nsc.org/resources/issues/radon/radon\\_poster.aspx](http://www.nsc.org/resources/issues/radon/radon_poster.aspx) for more information). This contest asks children to create a poster portraying radon hazards and safety, and is held annually to generate interest, enthusiasm, and action about radon safety and to increase the number of homes tested for radon.

### Get the Word Out

#### Through the Media:

- ▶ Publicize your efforts by writing a press release or letter to the editor of a local newspaper, explaining your workplace’s initiative and the results of your collective efforts. Sample press releases and letters are available in the Event Planning Kit.

#### Through EPA:

- ▶ View the activities in your state on EPA’s Activities Web page at [www.epa.gov/radon/nram/activities.html](http://www.epa.gov/radon/nram/activities.html). Then, share your workplace activities and events by filling out the online Activity Submittal Form at [www.nramactivities.com](http://www.nramactivities.com) to have them posted on the Activities Web page too.
- ▶ Share your efforts and the results of your workplace activities with the radon community nationwide by completing the online Feedback Form after National Radon Action Month. Your efforts may be recognized in the National Radon Action Month newsletter or Web site!

## Piloting New Methods to Reach Employees

For John Hultquist and David Neville of the Utah Division of Radiation Control, the key to a successful 2008 National Radon Action Month involved brainstorming in unique ways to inform employees about radon testing. John and David realized in January that the text block on their paystubs could be used for messages, so they sent a message about radon testing (including details about kit purchasing) to the payroll department and asked to have it placed into the state employees’ pay stubs. Because of the positive response from state employees, John and David also decided that January would be the right time to devise a way for all people to be informed about radon test kits. John and David contacted the Public Information Officer to set up a link on the State’s Department of Health Web page where employees and the general public could go to request a radon test kit. The Web page resulted in 131 requests for test kits. The Department of Facilities Construction and Management also helped spread the word by distributing radon posters to building facility coordinators to place on bulletin boards. The Utah Division of Radon Control also worked with local television stations to run stories throughout January on the risks of radon and issued a press release in an effort to launch a successful media outreach campaign. The Division also collaborated with the Utah Safety Council. The media outreach and collaboration with the Utah Safety Council resulted in 2,851 unique visitors to the Utah Division’s Web site, and a sale of 1,700 radon test kits to Utah citizens in January of 2008.

For more information on Utah’s radon efforts, visit [www.radon.utah.gov/index.htm](http://www.radon.utah.gov/index.htm).