

# Assessment of Vapor Intrusion in Homes Near the Raymark Superfund Site Using Basement and Sub-Slab Air Samples



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## Notice

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All data generated in this report were subjected to an analytical Quality Assurance Plan developed by EPA's New England Regional Laboratory. Also, a Quality Assurance Project Plan was implemented at the Ground Water and Ecosystems Restoration Division. Results of field-based studies and recommendations provided in this document have been subjected to external and internal peer and administrative reviews. This report provides technical recommendations, not policy guidance. It is not issued as an EPA Directive, and the recommendations of this report are not binding on enforcement actions carried out by the EPA or by the individual states of the United States of America. Neither the United States government nor the authors accept any liability or responsibility resulting from the use of this document. Implementation of the recommendations of the document and the interpretation of the results provided through that implementation are the sole responsibility of the user.

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## Foreword

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is charged by Congress with protecting the Nation's land, air, and water resources. Under a mandate of national environmental laws, the Agency strives to formulate and implement actions leading to a compatible balance between human activities and the ability of natural systems to support and nurture life. To meet these mandates, EPA's research program is providing data and technical support for solving environmental problems today and building a science knowledge base necessary to manage our ecological resources wisely, understand how pollutants affect our health, and prevent or reduce environmental risks in the future.

The National Risk Management Research Laboratory is the Agency's center for investigation of technological and management approaches for reducing risks from threats to human health and the environment. The focus of the Laboratory's research program is on methods for the prevention and control of pollution to air, land, water, and subsurface resources; protection of water quality in public water systems; remediation of contaminated sites and ground water; and prevention and control of indoor air pollution. The goal of this research effort is to catalyze development and implementation of innovative, cost-effective environmental technologies; develop scientific and engineering information needed by EPA to support regulatory and policy decisions; and provide technical support and information transfer to ensure effective implementation of environmental regulations and strategies.

This report describes the results of an investigation conducted to assist EPA's New England Regional Office in evaluating vapor intrusion in homes and a commercial building near the Raymark Superfund Site in Stratford, Connecticut. Methods were developed to sample sub-slab air and use basement and sub-slab air measurements to evaluate vapor intrusion on a building-by-building basis. Using the methods described in this report, volatile organic compounds detected in basement air due to vapor intrusion could be separated from numerous other halogenated and non-halogenated (e.g., petroleum hydrocarbons) compounds present in basement air.



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## Abstract

This report describes the results of an investigation conducted to assist EPA's New England Regional Office in evaluating vapor intrusion at 15 homes and one commercial building near the Raymark Superfund Site in Stratford, Connecticut. Methods were developed to sample sub-slab air and use basement and sub-slab air measurements to evaluate vapor intrusion on a building-by-building basis. A volatile organic compound (VOC) detected in basement air was considered due primarily to vapor intrusion if: (1) the VOC was detected in ground water or soil gas in the vicinity (e.g., 30 meters) of a building, and (2) statistical testing indicated equivalency between basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios of indicator VOCs and VOCs of interest. An indicator VOC was defined as a VOC detected in sub-slab air and known to be only associated with sub-surface contamination. Using this method of evaluation, VOCs detected in basement air due to vapor intrusion could easily be separated from numerous other halogenated and non-halogenated (e.g., petroleum hydrocarbons) VOCs present in basement air. As a matter of necessity, radon was used as an indicator compound at locations where an indicator VOC was not detected in basement air. However, when basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios were compared for radon and indicator VOCs, statistical non-equivalency occurred at three out of the four locations evaluated. Further research is needed to assess the usefulness of radon in assessing vapor intrusion.

Holes for sub-slab probes were drilled in concrete slabs using a rotary hammer drill. Probes were designed to allow for collection of air samples directly beneath a slab and in sub-slab media. Three to five probes were installed in each basement. Placement of a probe in a central location did not ensure detection of the highest VOC concentrations. Schematics illustrating the location of sub-slab probes and other slab penetrations (e.g., suction holes for sub-slab permeability testing) were prepared for each building to document sample locations, interpret sample results, and design corrective measures. Basement and sub-slab air samples were collected and analyzed for VOCs using six-liter SilcoCan canisters and EPA-Method TO-15. Sub-slab air samples were also collected in one-liter Tedlar bags using a peristaltic pump and analyzed on-site for target VOCs. Open-faced charcoal canisters were used to sample radon gas in basement air. Scintillation cells and a peristaltic pump were used to sample radon gas in sub-slab air.

Three methods were used to evaluate infiltration of basement air into sub-slab media during air extraction (purging + sampling). The first method consisted of sequentially collecting five one-liter Tedlar bag samples at a flow rate of 1 standard liter per minute and comparing vapor concentration of four VOCs associated with vapor intrusion as a function of extraction volume. This was performed at three locations with little effect on sample concentration. This testing also indicated the absence of rate-limited mass exchange during air extraction. Replicate canister

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samples representing extraction volumes of 5 to 9 and 10 to 14 liters were compared at two locations with similar results. A second method was then employed which utilized a mass balance equation and sub-slab and basement air concentrations. When sensitivity of the method permitted, infiltration was shown to be less than 1% at sampled locations. A third method involved simulating streamlines and travel time in sub-slab media during air extraction. Air permeability testing in sub-slab media was conducted to obtain estimates of radial and vertical air permeability to support air flow simulations. Simulations indicated that less than 10% of air extracted during purging and sampling could have originated as basement air when extracting up to 12 liters of air. Overall, extraction volumes used in this investigation (up to 14 liters) had little or no effect on sample results.

To assess the need for an equilibration period after probe installation, advective air flow modeling with particle tracking was employed to establish radial path lengths for diffusion modeling. Simulations indicated that in sub-slab material beneath homes at the Raymark site (sand and gravel), equilibration likely occurred in less than 2 hours. Sub-slab probes in this investigation were allowed to equilibrate for 1 to 3 days prior to sampling. A mass-balance equation was used to estimate the purging requirement prior to sampling. Simulations indicated that collection of 5 purge volumes would ensure that the exiting vapor concentration was 99% of the entering concentration even if vapor concentration inside the sample system had been reduced to zero concentration prior to sampling.



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## Table of Contents

Notice .....	ii
Foreword .....	iii
Abstract .....	iv
List of Chemical Abbreviations .....	viii
List of Figures.....	ix
List of Tables.....	xv
Acknowledgements .....	xxi
Executive Summary .....	xxii
1.0 Introduction .....	1
2.0 Site Description.....	3
3.0 Methods and Materials Used For Basement and Sub-Slab Air Sampling.....	6
3.1 Quality Control Measures for Sampling and Analysis Using EPA Method TO-15 .....	6
3.2 Basement and Outdoor Air Sampling for VOCs .....	10
3.3 Quality Control Measures and Data Quality for Basement Air Sampling and Analysis for Radon.....	11
3.4 Sub-Slab Probe Assembly and Installation .....	12
3.5 Sub-Slab Air Sample Collection for VOCs Using EPA Method TO-15.....	17
3.6 Quality Control Measures and Data Quality for Sub-Slab Air Sampling Using Tedlar Bags and On-Site GC Analysis .....	17
3.7 Quality Control Measures and Data Quality for Sub-Slab Air Sampling for Radon Using Scintillation Cells .....	19
4.0 Methods and Materials Used for Air Permeability Testing and Sub-Slab Flow Analysis .....	21
5.0 Discussion of Sampling Issues Associated with Sub-Slab Sampling .....	25
5.1 Assessment of Infiltration of Basement Air During Air Extraction .....	25
5.2 Assessment of Extraction Flow Rate .....	31
5.3 Evaluation of Equilibration Time .....	32
5.4 Selection of Purge Volume.....	34
5.5 Placement of Sub-Slab Vapor Probes .....	35
6.0 Use of Basement and Sub-Slab Air Measurement to Assess Vapor Intrusion.....	37
6.1 Method of Vapor Intrusion Evaluation .....	37
6.2 Summary of Results for Buildings Sampled in July and October 2002.....	39
6.3 Summary of Results for Buildings Sampled in March 2003 .....	62
6.4 Results of Radon Testing to Assess Vapor Intrusion .....	96
6.5 Summary of Basement/Sub-Slab Concentration Ratios.....	98
7.0 Summary.....	100
References .....	105



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## List of Chemical Abbreviations

1,1,1-TCA	1,1,1-trichloroethane
1,1-DCE	1,1-dichloroethylene
TCE	trichloroethylene
c-1,2-DCE	cis-1,2-dichloroethylene
1,1-DCA	1,1-dichloroethane
1,2-DCA	1,2-dichloroethane
PCE	perchloroethylene
CH <sub>2</sub> Cl <sub>2</sub>	methylene chloride
CHCl <sub>3</sub>	chloroform
CCl <sub>4</sub>	carbon tetrachloride
CCl <sub>3</sub> F	trichlorofluoromethane (F-11)
CCl <sub>2</sub> F <sub>2</sub>	dichlorodifluoromethane (F-12)
CHBrCl <sub>2</sub>	bromodichloromethane
CH <sub>3</sub> CH <sub>2</sub> Cl	chloroethane
CCl <sub>3</sub> CF <sub>3</sub>	trichlorotrifluoroethane (F-113)
THF	tetrahydrofuran
MEK	methyl ethyl ketone
MIBK	methyl isobutyl ketone
MTBE	methyl tert-butyl ether
1,2,4-TMB	1,2,4-trimethylbenzene
1,3,5-TMB	1,3,5-trimethylbenzene
CS <sub>2</sub>	carbon disulfide

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## List of Figures

<b>Figure 1</b>	Direction of ground-water flow (large arrows) and location of the residential area of investigation near the Raymark Superfund Site (modified from Tetra Tech NUS, Inc., 2000).....	3
<b>Figure 2</b>	Location of geologic cross-sections and the residential area of investigation near the Raymark Superfund Site (modified from Tetra Tech NUS, Inc., 2000) .....	4
<b>Figure 3</b>	Geologic cross-section G – G' (modified from Tetra Tech NUS, Inc., 2000).....	5
<b>Figure 4</b>	Geologic cross-section H – H' (modified from Tetra Tech NUS, Inc., 2000) .....	5
<b>Figure 5</b>	Collection of a replicate basement air sample.....	7
<b>Figure 6</b>	Replicate precision as a function of mean basement concentration for the July 2002 and March 2003 sampling events .....	9
<b>Figure 7</b>	Coefficient of variation (COV) as a function of mean basement concentration for July 2002 and March 2003 sampling events .....	9
<b>Figure 8</b>	Tripod and six-liter evacuated canister used to collect a 24-hour outdoor air sample during the March 2003 sampling event.....	10
<b>Figure 9</b>	Coefficient of variation (COV) as a function of mean basement radon concentration.....	12
<b>Figure 10</b>	General schematic of a sub-slab vapor probe.....	13
<b>Figure 11</b>	Brass materials used for sub-slab probe construction in homes near the Raymark facility .....	13
<b>Figure 12</b>	Hex bushing used for probe construction when a concrete slab was less than 2.5 cm thick.....	13
<b>Figure 13</b>	A comparison of VOC concentrations in outdoor air and outdoor air passing through brass fittings used for probe construction during the July 2002 sampling event. Dashed lines indicate detection limits.....	14
<b>Figure 14</b>	Stainless-steel materials now used for sub-slab probe assembly .....	14

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## List of Figures — continued

<b>Figure 15</b>	Drilling through a concrete slab using a rotary hammer drill.....	15
<b>Figure 16</b>	"Inner" and "outer" holes drilled in a concrete slab .....	15
<b>Figure 17</b>	Typical schematic illustrating location of sub-slab vapor probes .....	16
<b>Figure 18</b>	Sample train for sub-slab air collection using EPA Method TO-15 .....	17
<b>Figure 19</b>	Sample train for sub-slab air collection using one-liter Tedlar bags .....	18
<b>Figure 20</b>	Comparison of EPA Method TO-15 and Tedlar bag sampling with on-site GC analysis for 1,1,1-TCA, 1,1-DCE, TCE, and c-1,2-DCE, n = 91, $r^2 = 0.88$ .....	19
<b>Figure 21</b>	Sample train for sub-slab air collection for radon using scintillation cells.....	20
<b>Figure 22</b>	Regenerative blower used for air permeability testing .....	21
<b>Figure 23</b>	Variable-area flowmeter used for air permeability testing.....	22
<b>Figure 24</b>	Magnehelic gauges and suction hole used for vacuum measurement.....	22
<b>Figure 25</b>	Best-fit model results for permeability test conducted at House C with four vacuum observation points and a flow rate of 255 SLPM ( $k_r/k_z$ constrained between 1 – 2) .....	24
<b>Figure 26a</b>	Sub-slab vapor concentration as a function of extraction volume at Probe A in House L using Tedlar bag sampling and on-site GC analysis .....	26
<b>Figure 26b</b>	Sub-slab vapor concentration as a function of extraction volume at Probe B in House M using Tedlar bag sampling and on-site GC analysis .....	26
<b>Figure 26c</b>	Sub-slab vapor concentration as a function of extraction volume at Probe A in House N using Tedlar bag sampling and on-site GC analysis. Dashed lines denote detection limit.....	27
<b>Figure 27a</b>	Sub-slab vapor concentration as a function of extraction volume at Probe A in House J using EPA Method TO-15 .....	27
<b>Figure 27b</b>	Sub-slab vapor concentration as a function of extraction volume at Probe A in House M using EPA Method TO-15 .....	28
<b>Figure 28</b>	Simulated streamline (solid lines) and travel time (s) (dashed lines) contours in sub-slab media when $k_r = 7.4E-07$ cm <sup>2</sup> , $k_r/k_z = 1.5$ , $\ell = 3.2E-09$ cm, flow rate = 1 SLPM, and depth to ground water = 500 cm.....	30

## List of Figures — continued

<b>Figure 29</b>	Simulated vacuum (Pa) (dashed lines) and pore-air velocity (solid lines) (cm/s) in sub-slab media when $k_r = 7.4E-07 \text{ cm}^2$ , $k_r/k_z = 1.5$ , $\theta_a = 0.35$ , flow rate = 1 SLPM, and depth to ground water = 500 cm.....	31
<b>Figure 30</b>	Time to reach $C(t)/C_\delta = 0.99$ as a function of diffusion path length ' $\delta$ ' and $\theta_w$ for TCE when $C_0 = 0$ , $\eta = 0.4$ , $\rho_b = 1.68 \text{ g/cm}^3$ , $D_a = 7.4E-02 \text{ cm}^2/\text{s}$ , $D_w = 9.3E-06 \text{ cm}^2/\text{s}$ , and $H = 0.38$ (no sorption).....	34
<b>Figure 31</b>	Purge volume as a function of $C_0/C_{in}$ and $C_{out}/C_{in}$ .....	35
<b>Figure 32</b>	Total vapor concentration measured in one-liter Tedlar bags as a function of probe location and house. Dark bars refer to centrally located probes. No VOCs associated with subsurface contamination were detected at Location F. Locations H, K, M, and P did not have a centrally located probe .....	36
<b>Figure 33</b>	Coefficient of variation (COV) as a function of mean sub-slab concentration (ppbv) and method of analysis for VOCs associated with subsurface contamination .....	36
<b>Figure 34</b>	Basement/sub-slab concentration ratios using EPA Method TO-15 at House A during the July 2002 sample event. Error bars represent one standard deviation. Arrows indicate greater than or less than values due to non-detection in basement or sub-slab air .....	42
<b>Figure 35</b>	Comparison of mean sub-slab air concentrations of VOCs collected in one-liter Tedlar bags during the July and October 2002 sample events at House A. Error bars represent one standard deviation .....	44
<b>Figure 36</b>	Basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios using EPA Method TO-15 at House B during the July 2002 sample event – error bars represent one standard deviation. Arrows indicate greater than or less than values due to non-detection in basement or sub-slab air .....	47
<b>Figure 37</b>	Comparison of mean sub-slab air concentrations of VOCs collected in one-liter Tedlar bags during the July and October 2002 sample events at House B. Error bars represent one standard deviation .....	48
<b>Figure 38</b>	Basement/sub-slab concentration ratios using EPA Method TO-15 at House C during the July 2002 sample event. Error bars represent one standard deviation. Arrows indicate greater than or less than values due to non-detection in basement or sub-slab air .....	51
<b>Figure 39</b>	Comparison of mean sub-slab air concentrations of VOCs collected in one-liter Tedlar bags during the July and October 2002 sample events at House C. Error bars represent one standard deviation .....	53

---

## List of Figures — continued

- Figure 40** Basement/sub-slab concentration ratios using EPA Method TO-15 at House D during the July 2002 sample event. Error bars represent one standard deviation. Arrows indicate greater than or less than values due to non-detection in basement or sub-slab air ..... 56
- Figure 41** Comparison of mean sub-slab air concentrations of VOCs collected in one-liter Tedlar bags during the July and October 2002 sample events at House D. Error bars represent one standard deviation ..... 57
- Figure 42** Basement/sub-slab concentration ratios using EPA Method TO-15 at House E during the July 2002 sample event. Error bars represent one standard deviation. Arrows indicate greater than or less than values due to non-detection in basement or sub-slab air ..... 60
- Figure 43** Comparison of mean sub-slab air concentrations of VOCs collected in one-liter Tedlar bags during the July and October 2002 sample events at House E. Error bars represent one standard deviation ..... 61
- Figure 44** Basement/sub-slab concentration ratios using EPA Method TO-15 at House G during the March 2003 sample event. Error bars represent one standard deviation. Arrows indicate greater than or less than values due to non-detection in basement or sub-slab air ..... 67
- Figure 45** Basement/sub-slab concentration ratios using EPA Method TO-15 at House H during the March 2003 sample event. Error bars represent one standard deviation. Arrows indicate greater than or less than values due to non-detection in basement or sub-slab air ..... 71
- Figure 46** Basement/sub-slab concentration ratios using one-liter Tedlar bags and on-site GC analysis at House I during the March 2003 sample event. Error bars represent one standard deviation..... 73
- Figure 47** Basement/sub-slab concentration ratios using one-liter Tedlar bags and on-site GC analysis at House J during the March 2003 sample event. Error bars represent one standard deviation..... 76
- Figure 48** Basement/sub-slab concentration ratios using one-liter Tedlar bags and on-site GC analysis at House K during the March 2003 sample event. Error bars represent one standard deviation..... 79
- Figure 49** Basement/sub-slab concentration ratios using one-liter Tedlar bags and on-site GC analysis at House L during the March 2003 sample event. Error bars represent one standard deviation..... 82

---

## List of Figures — continued

<b>Figure 50</b>	Basement/sub-slab concentration ratios using one-liter Tedlar bags and on-site GC analysis at House M during the March 2003 sample event. Error bars represent one standard deviation. Arrows indicate less than values due to non-detection in basement air .....	85
<b>Figure 51</b>	Basement/sub-slab concentration ratios using EPA Method TO-15 at House N during the March 2003 sample event. Error bars represent one standard deviation. Arrows indicate greater than or less than values due to non-detection in basement or sub-slab air .....	89
<b>Figure 52</b>	Basement/sub-slab concentration ratios using EPA Method TO-15 at House O during the March 2003 sample event. Error bars represent one standard deviation. Arrows indicate greater than or less than values due to non-detection in basement or sub-slab air .....	92
<b>Figure 53</b>	Basement/sub-slab concentration ratios using EPA Method TO-15 at House P during the March 2003 sample event. Error bars represent one standard deviation. Arrows indicate greater than or less than values due to non-detection in basement or sub-slab air .....	96
<b>Figure 54</b>	Comparison of basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios for radon and indicator VOCs associated with vapor intrusion. Samples for VOCs collected in one-liter Tedlar bags with on-site GC analysis .....	97
<b>Figure 55</b>	Coefficient of variation (COV) as a function of location and compound for VOCs detected in basement air as a result of vapor intrusion.....	98
<b>Figure 56</b>	Summary of average basement/sub-slab concentration ratios for VOCs present in basement air due to vapor intrusion using one-liter Tedlar bags and on-site GC analysis. Arrows indicate less than values due to non-detection in basement air .....	99





---

## List of Tables

<b>Table 1</b>	Computation of maximum percent infiltration of basement air into an evacuated canister during sampling as a function of extraction volume, location, and probe. P[A], P[B], P[C], P[D], and P[E] denote probes evaluated at individual locations .....29
<b>Table 2</b>	Outdoor air concentrations of VOCs during the July 2002 and March 2003 sample events.....39
<b>Table 3a</b>	Basement and sub-slab concentrations of VOCs at House A using EPA Method TO-15 during the July 2002 sample event.....41
<b>Table 3b</b>	Summary of basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios of VOCs associated with sub-surface contamination in House A using EPA Method TO-15 during the July 2002 sample event .....43
<b>Table 3c</b>	Summary of basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios of VOCs associated with sub-surface contamination in House A using 1-liter Tedlar bags and on-site GC analysis during the July 2002 sample event .....43
<b>Table 3d</b>	Sub-slab air concentrations of VOCs associated with sub-surface contamination in House A using 1-liter Tedlar bags and on-site GC analysis during the October 2002 sample event.....43
<b>Table 4a</b>	Basement and sub-slab concentrations of VOCs at House B using EPA Method TO-15 during the July 2002 sample event.....45
<b>Table 4b</b>	Summary of basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios of VOCs associated with sub-surface contamination in House B using EPA Method TO-15 during the July 2002 sample event .....46
<b>Table 4c</b>	Summary of basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios of VOCs associated with sub-surface contamination in House B using 1-liter Tedlar bags and on-site GC analysis during the July 2002 sample event .....46
<b>Table 4d</b>	Sub-slab air concentrations of VOCs associated with sub-surface contamination in House B using 1-liter Tedlar bags and on-site GC analysis during the October 2002 sample event.....48

---

## List of Tables — continued

<b>Table 5a</b>	Basement and sub-slab air concentrations of VOCs at House C using EPA Method TO-15 during the July 2002 sample event.....	50
<b>Table 5b</b>	Summary of basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios of VOCs associated with sub-surface contamination in House C using EPA Method TO-15 during the July 2002 sample event .....	51
<b>Table 5c</b>	Summary of basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios of VOCs associated with sub-surface contamination in House C using 1-liter Tedlar bags and on-site GC analysis during the July 2002 sample event .....	51
<b>Table 5d</b>	Sub-slab air concentrations of VOCs associated with sub-surface contamination in House C using 1-liter Tedlar bags and on-site GC analysis during the October 2002 sample event.....	52
<b>Table 6a</b>	Basement and sub-slab concentrations of VOCs at House D using EPA Method TO-15 during the July 2002 sample event.....	54
<b>Table 6b</b>	Summary of basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios of VOCs associated with sub-surface contamination in House D using EPA Method TO-15 during the July 2002 sample event .....	55
<b>Table 6c</b>	Summary of basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios of VOCs associated with sub-surface contamination in House D using 1-liter Tedlar bags and on-site GC analysis during the July 2002 sample event .....	55
<b>Table 6d</b>	Sub-slab air concentrations of VOCs associated with sub-surface contamination in House D using 1-liter Tedlar bags and on-site GC analysis during the October 2002 sample event.....	56
<b>Table 7a</b>	Basement/sub-slab air concentrations of VOCs at House E using EPA Method TO-15 during the July 2002 sample event.....	58
<b>Table 7b</b>	Summary of basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios of VOCs associated with sub-surface contamination in House E using EPA Method TO-15 during the July 2002 sample event .....	59
<b>Table 7c</b>	Summary of basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios of VOCs associated with sub-surface contamination in House E using 1-liter Tedlar bags and on-site GC analysis during the July 2002 sample event .....	59

---

## List of Tables — continued

<b>Table 7d</b>	Sub-slab air concentrations of VOCs associated with sub-surface contamination in House E using 1-liter Tedlar bags and on-site GC analysis during the October 2002 sample event.....	61
<b>Table 8</b>	Basement and sub-slab air concentrations for VOCs at House F using EPA Method TO-15 during the March 2003 sample event .....	63
<b>Table 9a</b>	Basement and sub-slab air concentration of VOCs at House G using EPA Method TO-15 during the March 2003 sample event .....	65
<b>Table 9b</b>	Summary of basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios of VOCs associated with sub-surface contamination in House G using EPA Method TO-15 during the March 2003 sample event.....	66
<b>Table 9c</b>	Summary of basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios of VOCs associated with sub-surface contamination in House G using 1-liter Tedlar bags and on-site GC analysis during the March 2003 sample event.....	66
<b>Table 9d</b>	Basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios for radon in House G using 48-hr activated carbon canisters for basement air sampling (3/25-3/27/03) and scintillation cells for sub-slab air sampling during the March 2003 sample event.....	67
<b>Table 10a</b>	Basement and sub-slab air concentrations for VOCs at House H using EPA Method TO-15 during the March 2003 sample event .....	69
<b>Table 10b</b>	Summary of basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios of VOCs associated with sub-surface contamination in House H using EPA Method TO-15 during the March 2003 sample event.....	70
<b>Table 10c</b>	Summary of basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios of VOCs associated with sub-surface contamination in House H using 1-liter Tedlar bags and on-site GC analysis during the March 2003 sample event.....	70
<b>Table 10d</b>	Basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios for radon in House H using 48-hr activated carbon canisters for basement air sampling (3/21-3/24/03) and scintillation cells for sub-slab air sampling during the March 2003 sample event.....	70
<b>Table 11a</b>	Basement and sub-slab air concentrations for VOCs at House I using EPA Method TO-15 during the March 2003 sample event .....	72
<b>Table 11b</b>	Summary of basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios of VOCs associated with sub-surface contamination in House H using 1-liter Tedlar bags and on-site GC analysis during the March 2003 sample event.....	73

---

## List of Tables — continued

<b>Table 12a</b>	Basement and sub-slab air concentrations for VOCs at House J using EPA Method TO-15 during the March 2003 sample event .....	74
<b>Table 12b</b>	Summary of basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios of VOCs associated with sub-surface contamination in House J using 1-liter Tedlar bags and on-site GC analysis during the March 2003 sample event .....	75
<b>Table 12c</b>	Basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios for radon in House J using 48-hr activated carbon canisters for basement air sampling (3/21-3/24/03) and scintillation cells for sub-slab sampling during the March 2003 sample event.....	75
<b>Table 13a</b>	Basement air concentrations for VOCs at House K using EPA Method TO-15 during the March 2003 sample event .....	77
<b>Table 13b</b>	Summary of basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios of VOCs associated with sub-surface contamination in House K using 1-liter Tedlar bags and on-site GC analysis during the March 2003 sample event.....	78
<b>Table 13c</b>	Basement and sub-slab air concentration ratios for radon in House K using 48-hr activated carbon canisters for basement air sampling (3/21-3/24/03) and scintillation cells for sub-slab air sampling during the March 2003 sample event.....	78
<b>Table 14a</b>	Basement and sub-slab air concentrations for VOCs at House L using EPA Method TO-15 during the March 2003 sample event .....	80
<b>Table 14b</b>	Results of sequential sub-slab air sampling using 1-liter Tedlar bags and on-site GC analysis at House L during the March 2003 sample event .....	81
<b>Table 14c</b>	Summary of basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios of VOCs associated with sub-surface contamination in House L using 1-liter Tedlar bags and on-site GC analysis during the March 2003 sample event .....	81
<b>Table 14d</b>	Summary of 48-hour indoor air measurements for radon using activated charcoal at House L.....	81
<b>Table 14e</b>	Basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios for radon in House L using 48-hr activated carbon canisters for basement air sampling (3/26-3/28/03) and scintillation cells for sub-slab air sampling during the March 2003 sample event.....	81
<b>Table 15a</b>	Basement and sub-slab air concentrations for VOCs at House M using EPA Method TO-15 during the March 2003 sample event .....	83

---

## List of Tables — continued

<b>Table 15b</b>	Results of sequential sub-slab air sampling using 1-liter Tedlar bags and on-site GC analysis at House M during the March 2003 sample event .....	84
<b>Table 15c</b>	Summary of basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios of VOCs associated with sub-surface contamination in House M using 1-liter Tedlar bags and on-site GC analysis during the March 2003 sample event .....	84
<b>Table 15d</b>	Basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios for radon in House M using 48-hr activated carbon canisters for basement air sampling (3/22-3/24/03) and scintillation cells for sub-slab air sampling during the March 2003 sample event.....	84
<b>Table 16a</b>	Basement and sub-slab air concentrations for VOCs at House N using EPA Method TO-15 during the March 2003 sample event .....	86
<b>Table 16b</b>	Summary of basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios of VOCs associated with sub-surface contamination in House N using EPA Method TO-15 during the March 2003 sample event.....	87
<b>Table 16c</b>	Results of sequential sub-slab air sampling and on-site GC analysis using 1-liter Tedlar bags at House N during the March 2003 sample event .....	88
<b>Table 16d</b>	Summary of basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios of VOCs associated with sub-surface contamination in House N using 1-liter Tedlar bags and on-site GC analysis during the March 2003 sample event.....	88
<b>Table 16e</b>	Basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios for radon in House N using 48-hr activated carbon canisters for basement air sampling (3/25-3/27/03) and scintillation cells for sub-slab air sampling during the March 2003 sample event.....	88
<b>Table 17a</b>	Basement and sub-slab concentrations for VOCs at House O using EPA Method TO-15 during the March 2003 sample event .....	90
<b>Table 17b</b>	Summary of basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios of VOCs associated with sub-surface contamination in House O using EPA Method TO-15 during the March 2003 sample event.....	91
<b>Table 17c</b>	Summary of basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios of VOCs associated with sub-surface contamination in House O using 1-liter Tedlar bags and on-site GC analysis during the March 2003 sample event.....	91
<b>Table 17d</b>	Basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios for radon in House O using 48-hr activated carbon canisters for basement air sampling (3/25-3/27/03) and scintillation cells for sub-slab air sampling during the March 2003 sample event.....	92



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## List of Tables — continued

<b>Table 18a</b>	Basement and sub-slab air concentrations for VOCs at House P using EPA Method TO-15 during the March 2003 sample event .....	94
<b>Table 18b</b>	Summary of basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios of VOCs associated with sub-surface contamination in House P using EPA Method TO-15 during the March 2003 sample event.....	95
<b>Table 18c</b>	Summary of basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios of VOCs associated with sub-surface contamination in House P using 1-liter Tedlar bags and on-site GC analysis during the March 2003 sample event.....	95
<b>Table 18d</b>	Basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios for radon in House P using 48-hr activated carbon canisters for basement air sampling (3/26-3/28/03) and scintillation cells for sub-slab air sampling during the March 2003 sample event.....	95

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## Executive Summary

This report describes the results of an investigation conducted to assist EPA's New England Regional Office in evaluating vapor intrusion at 15 homes and one commercial building near the Raymark Superfund Site in Stratford, Connecticut. Ground water beneath these homes is contaminated with 1,1,1-trichloroethane, 1,1-dichloroethylene, trichloroethylene, cis-1,1-dichloroethylene, and 1,1-dichloroethane. Methods were developed to sample sub-slab air and use basement and sub-slab air measurements to evaluate vapor intrusion on a building-by-building basis. A volatile organic compound (VOC) detected in basement air was considered due primarily to vapor intrusion if: (1) the VOC was detected in ground water or soil gas in the vicinity (e.g., 30 meters) of a building, and (2) the null hypothesis that the basement/sub-slab air concentration ratio of the VOC was equal to the basement/sub-slab air concentration ratio of an indicator VOC could not be rejected using a one-tailed Approximate t-Test at a level of significance less than or equal to 0.05. An indicator VOC was defined as a VOC detected in sub-slab air and known to be associated only with sub-surface contamination (i.e., no outdoor or indoor air sources). The VOCs 1,1-dichloroethylene and 1,1-dichloroethane were considered indicator VOCs in this investigation because they are degradation products of 1,1,1-trichloroethane and not commonly associated with commercial products. The VOC cis-1,2-dichloroethylene was considered an indicator VOC because it is a degradation product of trichloroethylene and also not commonly associated with commercial products. Using this method of evaluation, VOCs detected in basement air due to vapor intrusion could easily be separated from numerous other halogenated and non-halogenated (e.g., petroleum hydrocarbons) VOCs present in basement air. The variance associated with each basement/sub-slab air concentration ratio was calculated using the method of propagation of errors which incorporated the variance associated with both basement and sub-slab air measurement. An average basement/sub-slab air concentration ratio was computed using concentration ratios of all VOCs detected in basement air and associated with vapor intrusion. The method of propagation of errors was then used to calculate the variance associated with the average basement/sub-slab concentration ratio.

As a matter of necessity, radon was used as an indicator compound at locations where an indicator VOC was not detected in basement air. However, when basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios were compared for radon and indicator VOCs, statistical non-equivalency occurred at three out of the four locations evaluated. At these three locations, the null hypothesis that the basement/sub-slab air concentration ratio of radon was equal to the basement/sub-slab air concentration ratio of the indicator VOC, 1,1-DCE, was rejected using a two-tailed Approximate t-Test at a significance level less than or

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equal to 0.1. There was a visual dissimilarity between the basement/sub-slab air concentration ratio of radon and VOCs associated with vapor intrusion. This was in contrast to visual and statistical (levels of significance always greater than 0.1) similarity of basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios of indicator VOCs and other VOCs associated with vapor intrusion. These two observations indicate, at least in this investigation, use of indicator VOCs was preferable to radon in assessing vapor intrusion. Further research is needed at other sites containing indicator VOCs to determine the usefulness of radon in assessing vapor intrusion.

Holes for sub-slab probes were drilled in concrete slabs using a rotary hammer drill. Probes were designed to allow for collection of air samples directly beneath a slab and in sub-slab media. Three to five probes were installed in each basement. Fifty-five probes were installed in 16 buildings which, on average, resulted in placement of one probe every 220 ft<sup>2</sup>. Observation of high coefficients of variation in sub-slab air concentrations (greater than 100% at several locations), and the need for statistical analysis in assessing basement/sub-slab air concentration ratios, indicated that placement of multiple probes in sub-slab media was necessary to evaluate vapor intrusion. Generally, one sub-slab vapor probe was centrally located while two or more probes were placed within one or two meters of basement walls in each building. In this investigation, placement of a probe in a central location did not ensure detection of the highest VOC concentrations in sub-slab media. Schematics illustrating the location of sub-slab probes and other slab penetrations (e.g., suction holes for sub-slab permeability testing) were prepared for each building to document sample locations, interpret sample results, and design corrective measures.

Basement and sub-slab air samples were collected and analyzed for VOCs using six-liter SilcoCan canisters and EPA-Method TO-15. Sub-slab air samples were also collected in one-liter Tedlar bags using a peristaltic pump and analyzed on-site for target VOCs by EPA's New England Regional Laboratory within 24 hours of sample collection. Open-faced charcoal canisters were used to sample radon gas in basement air over a 48-hour period. Scintillation cells and a peristaltic pump were used to sample radon gas in sub-slab air. Scintillation cells were analyzed within four hours using a portable radiation monitor to count and amplify light pulses.

Three methods were used to evaluate infiltration of basement air into sub-slab media during air extraction (purging + sampling). The first method consisted of sequentially collecting five one-liter Tedlar bag samples at a flow rate of 1 standard liter per minute and comparing vapor concentration of four VOCs associated with vapor intrusion as a function of extraction volume. This was performed at three locations with little effect on sample concentration. This testing also indicated the absence of rate-limited mass exchange during air extraction. Replicate canister samples representing extraction volumes of 5 to 9 and 10 to 14 liters were compared at two locations with similar results. A second method was then employed which utilized a mass balance equation and sub-slab and basement air concentrations. When sensitivity of the method permitted, infiltration was shown to be less than 1% at sampled locations. A third method involved

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simulating streamlines and travel time in sub-slab media during air extraction. Air permeability testing in sub-slab media was conducted to obtain estimates of radial and vertical air permeability to support air flow simulations. Simulations indicated that less than 10% of air extracted during purging and sampling could have originated as basement air when extracting up to 12 liters of air. Overall, extraction volumes used in this investigation (up to 14 liters) had little or no effect on sample results.

To assess the time required after probe installation for sampling (equilibration period), advective air flow modeling with particle tracking was employed to establish radial path lengths for diffusion modeling. Simulations indicated that in sub-slab material beneath homes at the Raymark site (sand and gravel), equilibration likely occurred in less than 2 hours. Sub-slab probes in this investigation were allowed to equilibrate for 1 to 3 days prior to sampling. A mass-balance equation was used to estimate the purging requirement prior to sampling. Simulations indicated that collection of 5 purge volumes would ensure that the exiting vapor concentration was 99% of the entering concentration even if vapor concentration inside the sample system had been reduced to zero concentration prior to sampling. A purge volume for the sample train used in homes near the Raymark site was typically less than 10 cm<sup>3</sup>.

In summary, this report constitutes an important first step in the development of a technical resource document on sub-slab air sampling and use of indoor and sub-slab air samples to assess vapor intrusion.