

Environmental **Radon** Newsletter

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Radon Information Packs Supplied by NRPB

Jane Smithard, National Radiological Protection Board

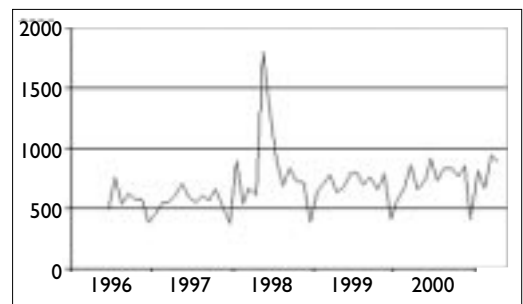
It is over 20 years since the first radon measurements were made in UK homes, and the programme so far has obtained results in around 430,000 homes. Of these, some 42,000 exceeded the radon Action Level of 200 Bq m^{-3} and the householders concerned have received advice on reducing levels.

One of the key aspects contributing to the success of the programme has been the increasing public awareness and understanding about radon, which has been achieved by providing accurate information about risks without scare-mongering. The National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) has developed radon information packs to cater for the needs of both householders and professionals. These contain material produced by the relevant Government Departments and specialist agencies, such as the Building Research Establishment, as well as information prepared by the NRPB.

The number of people asking for radon information has gradually increased over the years, with peaks of interest after press coverage of the radon issue. The graph shows the numbers of requests per month over the past 5 years, which increased from around 600 to 800 per month on average. But the press coverage generated in 1998 when the Imperial Cancer Research Fund published its study on the risk of lung cancer from radon produced more than 4000 enquiries in 3 months.

The vast majority of people contacting NRPB for advice have been referred as part of the home buying process, so the buoyant housing market and revised professional practices may well account for increased demand. If the trend continues, it is likely that NRPB will send out around 10,500 information packs in 2001.

The table shows the numbers of requests for information packs received by different routes and from different groups in the year to April 2001. In the same period, a further 600 e-mail enquires received an electronic reply. The number of enquiries dealt with verbally over the telephone remains high, both for general information and for specific queries.



Number of information packs issued per month

As this workload has to be managed alongside the effort needed for the measurement programme, it is essential to have a method of dealing with enquiries that requires the minimum staff effort, while providing a speedy, appropriate response. Every day at around noon, the requests that have come in during the previous 24 hours are entered into the system and information is despatched by second class post, or first class if it is urgent. Only when there is long weekend around a Bank Holiday do people have to wait more than a few days.

Anyone with access to the internet can find radon information on the NRPB website at <http://www.nrpb.org.uk> Otherwise, a request for information can be left on the 24 hour free answering service on 0800 614529.

This is a shortened version of an article which will appear in a future edition of the Radiological Protection

Source of enquiry	Type of enquirer		
	Householder	Professional	Other
Manned telephone	2450	488	170
Radon Freephone	4575	416	122
Letter	220	325	8
Fax	27	47	2
E-mail	177	15	15
Total	7449	1291	318

Radon information packs issued, April 2000 to April 2001

POINTS OF CONTACT

Building Research Establishment (BRE)
Garston, Watford, WD2 7JR
BRE Radon Hot Line:
Tel: 01923 664707 Fax: 01923 664010

National Radiological Protection Board
Radon Survey
Chilton, Didcot, OX11 0RQ
Radon Freephone: 0800 614529
Fax: 01235 833891

Department for Environment,
Food and Rural Affairs
Zone 4-E8, Ashdown House
123 Victoria Street, London SW1 6DE
Tel: 020 7890 6266/6265 Fax: 020 7890 6289

Welsh Office Housing Division
Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF1 3NQ
Tel: 01222 825219 Fax: 01222 825391

Environment and Heritage Service
Department of the Environment for
Northern Ireland
Calvert House, 23 Castle Place
Belfast, BT1 1FY
Tel: 01232 254754 Fax: 01232 254700

Scottish Executive Development Department
Housing Division 1
First Floor East, Victoria Quay
Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ
Tel: 0131 244 5575 Fax: 0131 244 5596

Health and Safety Executive
Health Directorate B6
Rose Court, 2 Southwark Bridge
London, SE1 9HF
Tel: 020 7717 6854 Fax: 020 7717 6717

Northern Radon Liaison Group
c/o Environmental Health Department
South Lakeland District Council
South Lakeland House, Lowther Street
Kendal, Cumbria, LA9 4UD

Radon South West Committee, Secretary
c/o Environmental Health
Teignbridge District Council
Forde House, Newton Abbott
Devon, TQ12 4XX

Steering Group on Radon
(Northamptonshire and elsewhere)
Environmental Health Department,
Daventry District Council
Lodge Road, Daventry
Northamptonshire, NN11 5AF.

Derbyshire Radon Steering Group
c/o Environmental Health Department
Derbyshire Dales District Council
Town Hall, Matlock
Derbyshire, DE4 3NN

The Radon Council Limited
PO Box 39, Shepperton
Middlesex, TW17 8AD
Tel: 01932 221212 Fax: 01932 229779

Somerset Radon Campaign Steering Group
c/o Taunton Deane Borough Council
The Deane House, Belvedere Road
Taunton, Somerset, TA1 1HE

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All newsletters can be seen at: www.nrp.org.uk/env-rn.htm

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Co-ordinating the Radon Programme

Daryl Dixon, National Radiological Protection Board

Communication between many different organisations is essential to ensure that action to tackle radon problems is effective and well co-ordinated. The organisations involved include Government bodies, local Councils, scientific bodies, and suppliers of goods and services including builders and other professional groups. Various committees have been long established to ensure that lines of communication reach this wide range of interested groups.

Strategic issues and the overall direction of the programme are discussed by a committee established and chaired by the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), formerly DETR. The Radon Policy Co-ordinating Committee (RPCC) brings together the principal bodies with national responsibility for radon.

It includes representatives from government Departments responsible for radon policy in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and from the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB), and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). The RPCC discusses such issues as the progress and direction of the UK radon programme, the significance and implications of technical developments, and the impact of the programme on other areas of Government activity such as housing policy.

The broad issues raised at the RPCC are often translated into local actions and initiatives through local Councils. The Local Authorities Radon Liaison Group (LARLG) provides the means by which common issues that have a direct local impact are identified and where the practical

operation of the programme is co-ordinated. The committee is chaired by DEFRA and includes environmental health and building control representatives from some of the local Councils most closely involved with the radon programme, as well as representatives of NRPB, BRE and HSE.

The Council representatives on LARLG are the chairs and vice-chairs of the four regional Radon Steering Groups (RSGs) which are listed in Points of Contact on page 2 of this newsletter. Each RSG provides a local focus for the radon programme which supports, encourages and informs the other Councils in the area. The meetings will generally be attended by twenty or so officers from Councils in the same and nearby counties as well as representatives from NRPB, BRE, DEFRA and sometimes BGS and HSE.

The topics discussed at RSGs include issues raised by members about local aspects of the programme, presentations from the national bodies on developments and issues arising in the radon programme, and occasional presentations on particular technical or administrative topics, such as enforcement of legislation in local workplaces. The issues raised at RSGs may be taken further at subsequent meetings of LARLG.

Another mechanism for liaison operates outside the public sector by drawing together the interests of commercial radon service providers, advisors and remedial contractors. These interests are met by The Radon Council. This is a body that requires its members to

conform to a Code of Practice to ensure that a high standard of service is provided. The Council is chaired by an independent scientist and meets about twice each year, with observers present from DETR/DEFRA and NRPB. The issues raised at meetings are principally concerned with developments in the radon programme, and reports on training initiatives.

Committee	Chair	Scope
Radon Policy Co-ordinating Committee	DEFRA	Development of national policy and strategy
Local Authorities Radon Liaison Group	DEFRA	Co-ordination of local initiatives
Radon Steering Groups	Local Council	Discussion and implementation of local programmes
Radon Council	Independent	Support for commercial interests

This newsletter is prepared for the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health by the National Radiological Protection Board. It is published quarterly as an insert in Environmental Health and distributed by the Royal Environmental Health Institute for Scotland. Any suggestions for topics for

future issues should be sent to Jon Miles at NRPB (see address on page 2). The views expressed in the contributions here are not necessarily those of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, the Royal Environmental Health Institute for Scotland or the National Radiological Protection Board.