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U.S. Public Health Service official releases statement regarding radon and smoking

Louisville, KY, January 12, 2009 – Susan M. Conrath, PhD, MPH, U.S. Public Health Service issued the following statement on December 17, 2008 regarding radon health risks and smoking:

“EPA's 2003 risk assessment, based on the National Academy of Science's BEIR VI Report shows a risk of lung cancer deaths to be 6/100 for smokers and 7/1000 for never smokers. Since most federal agencies regulate substances which cause 1 death per 100,000 and occasionally 1 death per million, the radon risks are huge.

While it is true that radon and smoking have a synergistic effect, merely controlling smoking [were it totally possible] would not address the risk to other members of the household or to the families which subsequently occupy the residence with elevated radon levels. Radon is a communal risk rather than an individual risk since all members of the household are exposed.”

Radon is a colorless, odorless, tasteless radioactive gas that derives from the radioactive decay of naturally occurring uranium in the soil. The gas enters homes and other buildings through cracks in the foundation, sump pumps and soil in crawlspace areas. The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has determined that radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer, next to smoking, and the leading cause among non-smokers. The US Surgeon General and National Academy of Sciences estimate that 21,000 radon-related lung cancer deaths occur in the United States each year.

January is National Radon Action Month. The Kentucky Association of Radon Professionals (KARP) urges Kentucky families to test their homes - the only way to know if a home contains elevated radon levels is to have it tested. Testing is easy and affordable. If a home is found to have a radon problem, fixing it is fairly simple and cost-effective. In fact, most radon problems can be fixed for a cost similar to that of many common home repairs, averaging \$1,000 to \$2,500.

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About KARP

The Kentucky Association of Radon Professionals is an organization consisting of responsible members of the radon testing, mitigation and laboratory analysis industries. More information about the organization can be found at: KentuckyRadon.org.

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