

# Environmental Group Issues Radon Challenge to Canadian Governments



Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that comes from the breakdown of uranium in the ground. Exposure to radon can impact your health, most notably causing lung cancer.

In fact, exposure to radon is the leading cause of lung cancer in non-smokers. And radon is identified as a top priority for action by CAREX Canada, a multi-institution research project that estimates the number of Canadians exposed to substances associated with cancer in workplace and community environments.

Initiatives on addressing the hazards of radon exposure usually focus on homes, not workplaces. But individuals can be exposed to this odourless and colourless indoor pollutant in their homes, schools and workplaces.

So the Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA), has issued a health-focused policy challenge to all of Canada's premiers and health ministers.

The Radon Policy Challenge includes information on radon and its effects as well as recommendations on what CELA believes government needs to do to protect its citizens. (You can download a PDF on it below.)

The recommendations that specifically apply to workplaces include:

- Ensure that the Naturally Occurring Radioactive Materials (NORM) Guidelines are clearly applied to *all* workplaces because radon can infiltrate any building regardless of what occupation may be occurring within it.
- Ensure laws, supplementary guidance and resources (where appropriate) governing occupational health and safety (among other things) be amended to address radon, to place duties on employers and building owners to ensure mandatory radon testing and mitigation if necessary to achieve indoor radon levels below the federal Radon Guideline reference level, and mandatory public notification of test results and mitigating strategies.
- Add legislative language giving the enforcement branches of public health units and OHS offices with the power to deploy a radon test upon inspection, and require remediation if radon test results are above federal Radon Guideline reference level.

Of course, nothing prevents employers from voluntarily taking steps to protect workers from exposure to excessive levels of radon on the job. For more

information on radon, testing and remediation steps, go to the Take Action on Radon site.

And the OHS Insider has resources, tools and additional information you can use to address indoor air quality and pollutant issues in general, including:

- Tips for preventing IAQ-related health problems
- Building IAQ Inspection Checklist and a Model General IAQ Inspection Checklist
- How to properly maintain IAQ in your facility
- How to protect workers from mould
- A model health survey you can use to gather information from workers who may be experiencing health problems related to IAQ.