

November 6, 2023

Dear School Administrators, Teachers, Staff, Parents and Students,

Re: Student Radon Skill Testing Contest

In order to spread the message about the health hazards of radon, the BC Lung Foundation and Interior Health have created posters for schools in the Interior Health region featuring a question about radon.

From November 1, 2023, until January 31, 2024, students have the opportunity to research and respond to the questions and submit their answers to BC Lung Foundation for a chance to win a prize. This period coincides with Canada's annual Radon Action Month in November.

This contest is open to students in grades 4 to 12 whose primary residence is in B.C.'s Southern Interior – areas within Interior Health boundaries – enrolled in public, independent or First Nations schools, or home schooled. It provides an opportunity for students to learn about radon and teach others. BC Lung Foundation will award prizes to the best answers, or randomly select among multiple potential winners.

Participation is free. Students read the posters, do research and submit answers to healthyindoor@bclung.ca by January 31, 2024. Further details about the contest, including the four question options, sources of information on radon, digital copies of the posters, contest rules, prizes to be won, and this letter are available at <https://bclung.ca/radoncontest>.

Please place the posters in highly visible areas of your school or office where students are likely to see them, as well as your website. We have designed the contest so that the different posters can be grouped together or displayed separately. Students can submit answers for one or four questions.

What is radon?

Radon is a naturally occurring colourless, odourless, radioactive gas that is released when uranium breaks down in soils and rocks. Radon released from the ground into outdoor air gets diluted. Radon is a problem in indoor settings, where it can build up and pose a risk to the health of individuals who spend a significant time in those areas.

Radon and lung cancer

Being exposed to radon does not produce any immediate symptoms, but long-term exposure to radon – at any level, and especially at high levels – can cause lung cancer.

The risk of developing lung cancer due to radon is even higher for smokers. **It is the leading cause of lung cancer for non-smokers and the second leading cause for smokers.** Lung cancer caused by radon is preventable because there are ways to reduce the amount of radon in your home and workplace.

Health Canada has set a radon guideline of 200 Becquerels per cubic metre (Bq/m³), which applies to indoor spaces that are regularly occupied four hours per day or more, including homes, workplaces, schools, and leisure spaces.

You can find excellent resources on radon from the British Columbia Centre for Disease Control, <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/prevention-public-health/radon>; Take Action on Radon, <https://takeactiononradon.ca/learn/>; and Health Canada, <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/health-risks-safety/radiation/radon.html>. Interior Health also has detailed information on radon, <https://www.interiorhealth.ca/health-and-wellness/environmental-health-and-hazards/radon-gas>. An excellent video on radon from the National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health can be viewed at <http://bclung.ca/health-air-quality/radon-and-lung-health/radon-public-health-and-cancer-prevention>.

Testing for and Mitigating Radon

The only way to know how much radon is in your home or workplace is through a test. Testing is recommended for all homes, especially those in areas with higher levels of radon and residents who smoke. Test kits are inexpensive and available for \$49.99 (including shipping) from the BC Lung Foundation, <https://bclung.ca/health-air-quality/healthy-indoor-environments-program/current-projects/buy-home-radon-test-kit>. If test results come back high, interim measures to increase ventilation can be implemented, and a mitigation professional can normally fix the problem long-term within a day or two.

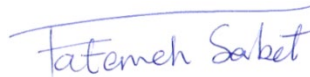
Almost a third of homes in the Interior Health region have radon over the Canadian radon guideline of 200 Bq/m³.

We look forward to radon becoming a more recognized issue, and for municipal and provincial governments to adopt radon action plans, laws, and policies to make sure everyone is protected.

Sincerely,



Christopher Lam
President and CEO
BC Lung Foundation



Dr. Fatemeh Sabet
Medical Health Officer
Interior Health