

Indoor Radon: The Federal Approach

by Richard J. Guimond



In September 1985, EPA Administrator Lee M. Thomas created a Radon Action Program to assist the states in dealing with radon problems in homes. Activities included in the EPA program can be grouped into four general categories:

Problem Assessment: EPA plans to conduct a national survey to evaluate the distribution of indoor radon levels across the country. In addition, EPA will provide technical assistance to states for surveys designed to identify specific areas that have a potential for significantly elevated levels of radon. To ensure that radon measurements are comparable and accurate, EPA has issued standardized measurement protocols and established a measurement proficiency program open to both governmental and private organizations.

Mitigation and Prevention: In this area, EPA is addressing the need for technology that is effective and inexpensive. The program includes demonstrations and evaluations of techniques to reduce radon levels in existing homes and identification and evaluation of ways to prevent radon problems from occurring in new homes.

Capability Development: The Radon Action Program includes efforts to help states and the private sector develop the technical capabilities needed: number one, to assess radon problems in homes and, number two, to help people reduce high radon levels.

Public Information: EPA is developing materials which provide information and guidance for citizens: to help them understand how to have measurements made, how to evaluate the health risks associated with high radon levels, and how to reduce those levels.

Indoor radon is too broad an issue to

(Guimond is the director of EPA's effort to help deal with radon.)

be addressed by any one agency. Many state and federal agencies are involved, as is a variety of private sector organizations. EPA recognizes that a coordinated approach to the problem must be taken and has designed the Radon Action Program as a partnership among its regional offices, the states, and the private sector, as well as other federal agencies.

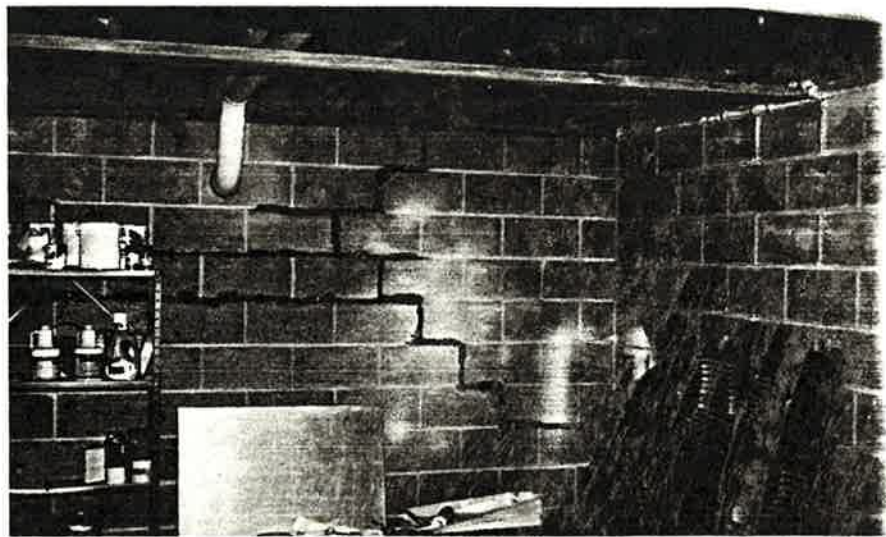
Within the federal government, a number of agencies are participating in joint activities to address radon problems from a variety of perspectives. The primary vehicle to coordinate research efforts among these agencies is the Committee on Indoor Air Quality's Radon Work Group. The members

To prevent radon entry, pipe (at top of picture) draws radon-containing soil gas from wall and vents it outdoors by means of an outside fan. Sealing up cracks in wall and top row of blocks enables fan to draw suction. The work in this Boyertown, PA, basement was done as part of an EPA program to demonstrate and evaluate radon reduction techniques.

include representatives from the Department of Energy, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Centers for Disease Control, the U.S. Geological Survey, the Tennessee Valley Authority, the National Institutes of Health, and the National Bureau of Standards. Participants plan and develop projects, prepare and review public information documents, and are developing a joint research strategy.

Another group which contributes to the federal effort on indoor radon is the Committee for Inter-agency Radiation Research and Policy Coordination. Through this committee, federal agencies are able to maintain a dialogue on overall research needs and long-range policy for radon-related activities.

Only through a cooperative effort involving many agencies working together can the problem of indoor radon be addressed successfully. EPA's Radon Action Program, as well as the activities of other federal agencies, help to ensure that the radon problem is dealt with in the most thorough and effective way possible. □



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