



UTAH

Radon Education and Mitigation in Utah County

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) ranks radon among the top four environmental risks to Americans. Because there is no known safe level of exposure to radon, EPA recommends that those whose homes are in the highest radon potentials, Zone 1 and Zone 2, take steps to lessen radon levels.* The Utah Department of Environmental Quality (UDEQ) showed that 35% of the homes tested in Utah County were in Zone 1.

Builders in Utah are encouraged, though not required, to use radon-resistant construction in Zone 1 and Zone 2 areas, and there is a need for radon-resistant new construction techniques in Utah County. This is especially important considering the county's growth trends; about 1,200 new residential construction building permits were issued in 2009.

The Utah Department of Health's Comprehensive Cancer Control Program provides mini-grants to community organizations to support the Utah Comprehensive Cancer Prevention and Control Plan. Habitat for Humanity of Utah County (HHU) and the Utah County Health Department received a mini-grant to increase radon awareness among residents and show that radon reduction can be a part of all home building and renovating projects.

This project educated elementary-aged students, home builders, and inspectors on the dangers of radon; promoted radon testing; and worked with builders to apply radon-resistant techniques. They also contributed to building three new radon-resistant homes and decreasing radon in two renovation homes. The first radon-resistant

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*United States Environmental Protection Agency. Radon. Available at <http://www.epa.gov/radon>.

home built was highlighted at a press conference on September 14, 2010 as part of the official kickoff for *Radon Tee: World Trek 2010*, a social media project sponsored by Cancer Survivors Against Radon (CanSAR) that used photos, videos, and personal stories to increase radon awareness, testing, and mitigation in communities around the world.

The project also

- Displayed information about radon testing and distributed about 100 radon test kits at the ReStore, HHU's resale outlets that sell reusable and surplus building materials to the public.
- Gave presentations at four elementary schools in Utah County to approximately 300 students and teachers about the link between indoor radon and lung cancer. Utah County students submitted about 60 posters to the National Radon Poster Contest.
- Provided a free continuing education course through UDEQ's Division of Radiation Control to 18 builders and inspectors who are members of the Utah Valley Home Builders Association.

These efforts have led to sustainable change in Utah County and throughout the state. UDEQ obtained funding from the EPA to have three HHU construction staff certified to install radon mitigation systems. HHU is committed to making all of their homes radon resistant because of the success of this project, and plans are underway to create a toolkit so that other builders can have similar results.



Radon is an odorless, colorless, radioactive gas. It is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States. Because radon comes from so many sources, people are easily exposed to it. Radon gas can seep through cracks in buildings and expose people to the radiation.