Radon-Resistant New Construction - Basics for Code Officials
Radon Exposure in Homes Is Significant

- Radon 222 - Naturally Occurring Radioactive Gas Element
  - Not Detected by Human Senses
  - Indoor concentrations are created by the way we design, build, and operate buildings where we live, learn, and work

Average annual radiation source exposures for US citizens

![Pie chart showing radon exposure]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Radon</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Medical</td>
<td>48%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medical Tomography</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medical Fluoroscopy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Background Internal</td>
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<td>Background Terrestrial</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consumer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
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</tbody>
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2006

All Medical 48%

Radon 37%
Basic Facts

• Radon is Everywhere!
• The only way to know the radon level is to test – it can’t be predicted
• Your house may be low, your neighbor’s may be high
• 95-99 out of 100 high homes can be fixed with fan powered soil suction systems
• 2nd leading cause of Lung Cancer!
How Radon Enters Your Home

- Exposed soil or rock in crawlspaces
- Cracks or flaws in foundation walls
- Around utility penetrations and support post
- Hollow objects such as support posts
- Cracks or flaws in floor slab
- Floor/wall joints
- Floor drains & sumps
What Does It Take to Build the House Radon Resistant?

- Foundation gas collection system
- Pipe to convey gas through roof
- A closed barrier between soil gas and indoor air
- Provision to add fan if needed
How Is the System Supposed to Work?

- It is designed to vent radon from beneath the structure by use of a vent pipe routed through the conditioned space of a building, connecting the sub-slab area with outdoor air.
- When air in the pipe is more buoyant than outside air, the air escaping the pipe creates a slight vacuum (pressure differential) to pull soil gas towards the outside.
- Known as Passive Soil Depressurization - PSD

[Image of a building with a vent pipe and labels: Living area, 3"-4" PVC pipe, Permanent airtight seal, PVC T-fitting, Min. 6" poly, Min. 4"-thick clean aggregate]
Two Major Reasons Passive Soil Depressurization is Used

1. To reduce indoor radon concentrations
   • In general, about 50% reduction over the course of a year is expected if properly installed

2. To make the house easy to fix if further radon reduction is needed
   • By activation with a fan
     • Stack must easily accessible outside conditioned space for fan installation
     • Power must be available near fan
     • Major openings between soil and occupied space must be sealed
International Residential Code (IRC) Appendix F: RRNC
(Initially intended for Zone 1)

- Adoption is encouraged for all zones as risk has increased since 1993

1993 EPA Radon Zone Map

EPA Radon Zones
- Red = High potential
  Zone 1 > 4.0 ave.
- Orange = Medium potential
  Zone 2, 2.0 to 4.0 ave.
- Yellow = Low potential
  Zone 3 < 2.0 ave.
IRC Appendix F: Section 103 Requirements (Overview)

1. General
2. Subfloor Preparation
3. Soil-Gas Retarder
4. Entry Routes
5. Passive Submembrane Depressurization (PSD) Systems: Crawlspace
6. PSD Systems: Basements and Crawlspace
7. Vent Pipe Drainage
8. Vent Pipe Access
9. Vent Pipe Identification
10. Combination Foundations
11. Building Depressurization
12. Power Source
PSD Can Work But ... It Needs To Be Done Correctly

- If not done correctly . . .
  - May not provide much, if any, radon reduction
  - Can make future activation, if needed, difficult, impractical, or impossible
- It is *highly important* to test all new homes for radon, even those with PSD
- PSD does not guarantee < 4 pCi/l but . . .
  - It does reduce indoor radon and it provides a system ready for activation if needed
RRNC Landscape

- State and local codes can require RRNC for homes in high radon-prone areas - but most don’t
- IBC needs an RRNC appendix
- IRC needs a better RRNC appendix
- Everyone who touches housing – homeowners, tenants, realtors, builders, code officials, radon professionals – has a self interest in RRNC done right the first time
Resources/Handout for You

http://sosradon.org/rrnc

Radon Resistant New Construction (RRNC)

• Why Consider RRNC?
• Installing Radon-Resistant Features
• RRNC What Do I Give My Builder? - RRNC Codes and Standards
• RRNC Fact Sheets

https://www.epa.gov/radon/building-codes-radon-resistant-new-construction-rrnc

http://www.nehacert.org/CDPHE/ColoRRNCVideo.html
Contacts

• Bruce Snead, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS bsnead@ksu.edu

• Gary Hodgden, Executive Stakeholder Chair for the ANSI/AARST Consortium on National Radon Standards gary@aaire.com