



# EPA Region 4 Stakeholders Meeting

APRIL 2, 2025

- ▶ *Reaching New Audiences & Engaging in New Communities with Important Health Outreach Messaging*
- ▶ *Expanding Awareness of Radon Exposure in Hard-to-Reach Populations*



# The Silent Killer

## *Why Radon Matters*

- **Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer** in the U.S. (EPA, CDC).
- Causes **21,000 lung cancer deaths annually** (EPA).
- **Colorless, odorless, tasteless**—many don't realize they're exposed.
- Found in **1 in 15 U.S. homes**—higher in certain regions.
- **Testing & mitigation are simple**, but awareness is low.

*Sources: EPA, CDC, American Lung Association*



# Radon & Lung Cancer

## *The Deadly Connection*



**Radon is the  
second leading  
cause of lung  
cancer in the U.S.**

(EPA, CDC)

- Causes **21,000 lung cancer deaths per year.**
- **Non-smokers exposed to radon have a risk comparable to secondhand smoke exposure.**
- **Smokers exposed to radon have a 10X higher risk of developing lung cancer than non-smokers.**

# The Outreach Challenge

## *Who We're Missing*

Traditional outreach efforts don't always reach the most vulnerable populations. Many don't see radon as an immediate concern—**if they can't see it, they don't worry about it.**

*Sources: Pew Research (Digital Divide), National Center for Health Statistics*

### **RURAL COMMUNITIES**

Limited internet access, less exposure to public health campaigns

### **MINORITY POPULATIONS**

Language barriers, mistrust in government sources

### **ELDERLY INDIVIDUALS**

Less digital engagement, may downplay risks

# Where Traditional Outreach Falls Short

**Heavy reliance on digital campaigns.**

Many still rely on radio, print, or word-of-mouth.

**Health messaging comes from government sources.**

Some communities lack trust in these institutions

**Complex messaging.**

Jargon-heavy materials don't connect emotionally.

**Few personal stories.**

Many still rely on radio, print, or word-of-mouth.

*Sources: Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Kaiser Family Foundation*



# Meet People Where They Are

*Sources: Journal of Health  
Communication, National  
Institutes of Health*



## Faith-Based Communities

(churches, mosques, synagogues)



## Local Gathering Places

(community centers, libraries, barbershops, salons)



## Events & Markets

(health fairs, farmers markets, neighborhood meetings)



## Partnerships with Trusted Figures

(local doctors, teachers, community leaders)

# Make It Personal & Actionable

▶ **Real stories** create emotional impact. People remember **personal experiences over statistics.**

- ✓ **Simple, clear calls to action**
- ✓ **Free or low-cost radon test kit programs** drive engagement

“Protect your loved ones—order a free test today.”

“Test your home for radon this month—it’s free and takes 10 minutes!”



## Radio & Community Newspapers

Still primary sources of information in rural and minority communities.



## SMS Text Alerts

More effective than email in low-interest areas.



## Local Influencers

Trusted social media voices can help spread the word.

# Leverage Non-Traditional Media

*Sources: Pew Research, FCC Broadband Report*



# The Role of Real Estate & Regulatory Stakeholders

## Who Ensures Homebuyers Know About Radon?

- **Realtors:** Must disclose known radon levels but are not always required to test.
- **Home Inspectors:** Many don't test for radon unless specifically requested.
- **Mortgage Lenders:** Some loans (e.g., FHA, VA) may require radon testing, but policies vary.
- **Local & State Governments:** Regulations differ—some states mandate testing/disclosure, others do not.



## Current Gaps & Needed Actions:

- ✓ **Mandate radon testing** during real estate transactions.
- ✓ **Standardize disclosure laws** across all states.
- ✓ **Ensure home inspectors include radon testing** in standard procedures.
- ✓ **Encourage mortgage companies** to require radon testing for loans.

*Sources: EPA, National Association of Realtors, American Society of Home Inspectors*

# Actionable Steps for Stakeholders



Identify & collaborate with **trusted community leaders**.



Develop **localized, culturally relevant messaging**.



Offer **free or discounted test kits** & simple mitigation steps.



Use a mix of **offline & online strategies**.



Track results & **adapt messaging as needed**.

# WHAT'S NEXT?

## Innovations in Radon Testing & Mitigation



### Advancements in Radon Testing

- **Next-Generation Digital Detectors:** Real-time monitoring via mobile apps
- **Professional Continuous Radon Monitors:** Remote monitoring for large-scale testing



### New Mitigation Technologies\*

- **Metal-Organic Frameworks (MOFs):** High-efficiency radon adsorption for smaller, cost-effective systems.
- **Integrated Air Purification Systems:** Reducing radon while improving overall air quality.

*\* This tech is new and developing. Their efficacy is still being studied*



### Community Initiatives

- **Free Radon Testing Kits:** Expanding access through public health programs.
- **New Policy Efforts:** Exploring stronger regulations for mandatory radon testing in home sales.

**Sources:** Airthings, Ecosense, EPA, Michigan Thumb Region Foundation

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

It was great to chat with you! Here are a few episodes I would like to share from the **Public Health Epidemiology Conversations Podcast** that may be helpful:

## **#365 Humanizing Public Health Work**

<https://www.drchhuntley.com/post/episode-365>

## **#367 The Power of Listening**

<https://www.drchhuntley.com/post/episode-367>

## **#376 Strengthening Professional Community Ties**

<https://www.drchhuntley.com/post/episode-376>

## **#381 Engaging Communities in Conversations**

<https://www.drchhuntley.com/post/episode-381>



*Closing Thought*

# Saving Lives, One Home at a Time

“

Awareness doesn't just spread—it's built, step by step, person by person.

”

- ▶ *Let's build that awareness together. Who will you reach today?*

# A Challenge to You

*Take One New Step*



Think of one  
**community** you  
haven't reached yet.

What's one new  
**strategy** you can apply  
immediately?

**Small changes lead to  
big results.**