

FIRST YEAR EVALUATION OF EPA'S  
RADON CONTRACTOR PROFICIENCY (RCP) PROGRAM

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**ABSTRACT**

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has developed a voluntary program to evaluate radon reduction contractors and provide this information to the public, as part of activities mandated by the Indoor Radon Abatement Act (IRAA) of 1988. The Radon Contractor Proficiency Program consists of several elements that collectively help to ensure the proficiency of radon mitigators and give the public greater confidence in their capability.

Contractors who participate in the program must pass a written examination, adhere to mitigation guidelines, keep records of work, meet continuing education requirements and pass a re-examination every two years. Upon meeting the program's requirements, mitigators are listed in EPA's National RCP Proficiency Report. The first Report released on May 15, 1990 listed 636 contractors. The second Report, to be released in August, will list 895 contractors, representing an increase of 40 per cent.

This paper describes the RCP program and the results of its first year of operation. It has been reviewed in accordance with the United States Environmental Protection Agency's peer and administrative review policies and approved for presentation and publication.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In 1985 EPA developed the Radon Action Program to help address the public health threat posed by radon gas contamination in buildings. Its primary goal was to reduce the radon health risk through four basic approaches:

- 1) Problem assessment- determining the distribution and levels of radon exposure across the country, and the associated health effects.

- 2) Development of mitigation and prevention methods to reduce radon levels in existing structures and prevent radon entry in new construction.

- 3) Capability development- assist States and the private sector in developing training programs to build a proficient work force able to diagnose and remedy radon problems in buildings.

- 4) Provide public information regarding the health risks associated with radon and methods for reducing these risks.

As part the basic approaches above, EPA developed the Radon Contractor Proficiency (RCP) Program to set basic quality assurance standards against which the proficiency of mitigation contractors could be assessed and to communicate this information to the public.

The RCP is a voluntary program consisting of several elements that collectively help to ensure the proficiency of radon mitigation contractors:

- \* recommended training
- \* passing a national proficiency exam
- \* complying with record keeping and inspection requirements
- \* adhering to mitigation guidelines
- \* meeting continuing education requirements
- \* passing a re-examination every two years.

The centerpiece of the RCP Program is the national proficiency exam. The exam was developed to set a national baseline measure of proficiency for evaluating each contractor's knowledge of radon and radon reduction methods. It is comprised of 150 multiple-choice questions covering six major areas of mitigation practice. These include:

- \* evaluation of measurement history
- \* diagnosis of the radon problem
- \* selection of a mitigation strategy and design of plan
- \* implementation of the strategy
- \* system evaluation
- \* professional standards of conduct and ethics

The exam was developed by the EPA with assistance from an exam development firm. State staff and expert mitigators from around the country provided valuable input to exam development. The exam has been offered 94 times to over 1400 mitigators through the end of July 1990.

Contractors participating in the RCP must adhere to EPA mitigation guidelines. These guidelines outline the basic minimum performance expected of mitigation contractors for the reduction of radon in buildings. The guidelines will be updated periodically. The public may wish to use these guidelines as a basis for evaluating service bids by contractors. A copy of the guidelines is contained in the RCP Proficiency Report described below. The Agency is also developing mitigation protocols which are more specific procedures relating to different radon reduction methods.

In order to maintain listing and proficiency status, a contractor must comply with record keeping and inspection requirements, adhere to the mitigation guidelines, complete requirements for continuing education and pass a follow-up exam every two years.

On May 15, 1990, the Agency issued the first National Radon Contractors Proficiency Report listing 636 contractors. The second report will be released in August and will list 895 contractors. The report has been widely circulated and acts as a resource to State governments, private industry and the public.

The report will be updated periodically and serves several purposes. First, it provides State governments with a means of identifying radon mitigators (and companies) for referral to the public. Second, it provides support to States that have developed, or are in the process of developing, certification programs for mitigation contractors. A requirement for State certification may include successful completion of EPA's national exam and listing.

Third, inclusion in the report provides EPA with a means of communicating the latest technology and health information to mitigation contractors.

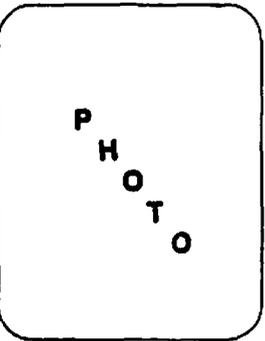
In order to assist the public in identifying proficient mitigators, EPA has issued a photo identification card to listed contractors. Exhibit 1 shows a sample of the card. In addition, various public information documents distributed through such sources as the national radon clearinghouse, EPA Public Information Office and the Advertising Council will reference the RCP Proficiency Report. The report is available to the public through the National Technical Information Service (NTIS) and can be ordered by calling (703) 487-4650. A listing of contractors providing services within a given state is exhibit 1 RCP Photo id card available free of charge from State Radon Offices. A list of State Radon Offices can be obtained by calling 1-800 SOSRADON.

## II. CONCLUSION

EPA has successfully developed a national radon mitigation proficiency program; The Radon Contractor Proficiency (RCP) Program. This program provides a comprehensive means of evaluating radon mitigation contractors and communicating this information to the public. The public can readily obtain this information by consulting the RCP Proficiency Report or by calling their State Radon Office.

## EXHIBIT 1

### RCP PROGRAM IDENTIFICATION CARD

 <b>USEPA Radon Contractor Proficiency Program</b>	
 P H O T O	 <b>EXPIRATION DATE</b>
	<b>NAME:</b> <b>ID#:</b> <small>The identified individual has completed the requirements for listing under the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Radon Contractor Proficiency (RCP) Program. This person is not an employee of, nor do they represent, the Federal Government.</small>

The EPA Radon Contractor Proficiency (RCP) Program evaluates the proficiency of radon mitigation contractors. This voluntary program does not accredit, certify, recommend, or endorse listed contractors, nor is it responsible for work done, or liability incurred by the contractor. Contractors must pass a written examination, keep records on mitigation work, adhere to mitigation guidelines, complete continuing education requirements, pass a reexamination every two years and maintain a current listing on the RCP National Radon Contractor Proficiency List. To verify current listing or to report problems, please call your State Department of Health or Environmental Protection.

### III. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The successful development of the Radon Contractor Proficiency Program could not have happened without the valuable contributions of RCP team members: Jed Harrison, John Hoornbeek, Lynne Gillette, Gene Fisher, Dave Price, John Mackinney, Theresea Whittaker and Violetta Martin. In addition, the author would like to specifically thank EPA's Regional staff, the EPA Office of Research and Development and Office of Toxic Substances, in particular Vanessa Rodriquez; the States of Florida, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Kentucky; members of the American Association of Radon Scientists and Technologists and the North American Radon Association.