

WOOD COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT RADON PROGRAM

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INTRODUCTION

Wood County is located in rural northwest Ohio and is comprised of 4 cities, 21 villages and approximately 113,000 residents. It is designated by the US EPA as a zone 2. The Wood County Health Department has participated in radon activities for six years using SIRG funding. Currently the main areas of focus are: 1) outreach to low income families through their WIC participation, 2) outreach and test kit distribution to the general public, 3) rebate program for radon resistant new construction, and 4) serving as the lead agency in a consortium of health departments. The following describes these programs in more detail to provide ideas for other health agencies to use or evolve for their own needs.

OUTREACH PROGRAM TO LOW INCOME FAMILIES

The Wood County Health Department has a very cooperative relationship with WIC personnel whereby they have been willing to include some radon information in the counseling of their clients. During their counseling sessions, the WIC personnel briefly describe risks of radon and give the client an information packet. The packet, purchased with grant funds, contains the "Citizens' Guide to Radon", a children's book with a sticker on it asking parents to test for radon, a pencil, and a coupon for a free test kit. Each packet costs about \$4.50: \$4 for book, \$0.25 for litter bag, \$0.10 for sticker and \$0.15 for the pencil. To get their test kit, the client must go to the Environmental Division and fill out a simple form and are instructed on how to use the test kit.

Along with their test kit, the client is given another coupon to be redeemed following the successful use of the test kit. The client is asked to return to the environmental division with the coupon and the test results letter. Providing the test results are valid, the client then receives a reward packet. The reward packet consists of a vinyl insulated lunch sack, a plastic container and lid, a nightlight, a fingerprint kit, and a card with 101 ways to praise children, all with a radon message imprinted on them. Each reward packet costs about \$8.50: \$2.75 for the lunch sack, \$2.45 for the sandwich saver, \$1.75 for the nightlight, \$1.05 for the fingerprint kit and \$0.50 for the 101 Ways of Praise Card. In addition, if the test result is 4 pCi L or above the client is given a second test kit to use. If the test results are invalid, the clients are given another test kit but do not receive the reward packet until

valid test results are achieved. A side benefit to this program is being able to reach a number of families with smokers living in the house. Until this program, the number of households with smokers that tested their home using test kits obtained from the Wood County Health Department was virtually nonexistent.

OUTREACH PROGRAM TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC

The Wood County Health Department conducts activities for the general public throughout the year. During Radon Awareness Month in October 1998, a press release was issued and test kits were given away. Throughout the testing season, test kits are sold at cost. In February for the last three years, the local Home Builders Association has given the Wood County Health Department a free booth at the annual house and home show. The display at the show utilizes a two part model which depicts 1) a home with radon resistant features and 2) the likely radon entry points in a home without radon resistant features. The booth also includes a radon test kit 'raffle' in which all entries from county residents are a winner. In addition, samples of the materials used in the actual construction of a radon resistant system are on hand for visitors to see. A second smaller display is included in the health department's booth at the county fair. The test kits that are sold or given away are AirChek charcoal kit. The Wood County Health Department and most consortium members have chosen to use AirChek for several reasons, including the ease of use, cost and availability of test results.

RADON RESISTANT REBATE PROGRAM

To promote the use of radon resistant new construction (RRNC) features, the Wood County Health Department started a rebate program. The program offered residents a \$150 rebate on their Private Sewage System Permit if they install the required features. To inform the resident about radon and the rebate program, specially designed folders are distributed with private sewage and water permit applications. The folders describe the RRNC features on the back and contain architectural drawings, rebate program requirements and an application for the rebate program. Each packet costs around \$1.00. Despite the ability to get \$150 of a \$200 fee back and the distribution of approximately 200 folders in 1999, only 8 applications have been received and no one has followed through for their first of two required inspections. In the three years the program has been available, only two rebates have been given. The reason for this lack of participation is unknown. One reason may be that, with the many responsibilities that a person has when building new home, perhaps this is one item they have chosen not to undertake. Another reason may be that it is a contractor, not the homeowner, that is collecting the permits and the information is not getting to the homeowner.

CONSORTIUM OF HEALTH DEPARTMENTS

While many health departments would like to offer radon services, several do not have the resources to do so despite the availability of grant funds. In order to allow more Ohio health departments to participate, the Wood County Health Department has taken the role as lead agency in a consortium of health departments. In this role, the Wood County Health Department writes the grant applications, provides the necessary reports to the state health department, and serves as a 'consultant' to agencies that are just beginning radon programs. In addition, the Wood County Health Department hosts MURC training to allow consortium members to have personnel trained and/or licensed.

To assist newly signed on health departments, a resource kit has put together. The kit contains a quiz board produced by Montana State Cooperative Agency, Tools for Schools Kit, literature holders for booklet and magazine sized literature, "Radon-resistant New Homes: A Public Official's Guide to Reducing Risk" Video produced by US EPA and NCSBCS. "Radon: The Health Hazard in your Home" Video. US EPA's "Introduction to Indoor Air Quality" Reference Manual and Learning Module. "Radon: A Practical Guide to Local Programs" produced by NACo., color map of US EPA radon zones and fact sheet. "Radon in Rental Housing" Booklet from Environmental Law Institute, a counter top sign holder to promote radon testing and a single copy of many of the public outreach documents available. The total kit costs about \$67.00: \$7 for the Storage Container. \$20.00 for the Quiz Board. \$15.00 for the Booklet-size Literature Holder, \$16 for the Magazine-size Literature Holder. \$5.00 for the Counter top Sign Holder. \$4.00 for a copy of Radon: The Health Hazard in your Home Video.

While the Wood County Health Department suggests activities to get a department started, each consortium member determines what they will do. Membership in the consortium changes from year to year as new health departments sign on or a member chooses not to participate in radon activities that year.

CLOSING

In the six years that the Wood County Health Department has been conducting radon activities, there have been many activities that have worked and a few that have not been so successful. There is still more work to be done, more evaluation, follow up and fine tuning of programs. The purpose of sharing this information is to give other health departments good ideas and perhaps receive suggestions from them.