

Entering A New Era in Responsible Radon Testing & Standards

By Stephen Gladstone

ASHI Standards have been in place for over 20 years. They helped to establish the minimum an inspector would be required to inspect, report on, observe, and our newest standards require additionally that the inspector transmit the importance of the findings to the client.

State Standards... Some have them, others don't... some have copied ASHI, some made up their own. Many by tweaking ours...

But standards are the trend... and for many having a standard in place will help to legitimize and solidify how an industry will be evaluated by it's critics, and supporters.

Radon Protocols: The EPA testing procedures have been loosely guiding us for years... but it is time to tighten the testing program up. Redefine the requirements and offer some more specifics to guide the testers, the labs, and the public. Even the EPA agrees.

State Protocols & ASHI Chapter Protocols... in Ct ASHI Chapters were so miffed at the problems of inconsistent conditions on tests that they met with the State officials and asked for a statement of understanding for consistency and quality control on radon testing in real estate transactions.

The result gave us a fact sheet that added strength to the argument that testing *should be done* properly or else not at all. The State of Ct. & Frank Homski should be congratulated for a willingness to take a stand on this.

Realtor Amnesia! Unfortunately the sly wink and attitude that radon is a joke perpetuates the perception testing is a rip-off, and that there is little evidence to back up lung cancers and their connection to radon. Realtors will speak of the Canadian acceptable levels and pooh-pooh ours. The fact that we still do not have a maximum contaminant level for radon in water is a testament to the strength of the realtor lobby and unfortunately the weakness of AARST. And the EPA. Establishment of a North American Testing Standard would inform and warn the realtor population of the liability brought upon the transaction when no testing or inappropriate testing is encouraged or allowed. I think this realization would end the open window phenomena and the forgotten call to the homeowner the night before the inspection to close up.

We in the inspection profession really need AARST to take a firmer grip on the Industry and become the recognized expert. We really want AARST to work with ASHI and create a team that will demand a higher standard of care and ethics. So that next year we can look at the numbers and show how we have helped to reduce the radon danger, increased the consumer awareness, and evaluated the systems in place, as to their effectiveness and appropriateness. Last year we discussed the emerging role of the home inspector as the major link in the major population that is testing for radon as a result of real estate deals. This is a given. We are your
2001 International Radon Symposium

outreach in the field. We are highly trained professionals dealing with many aspects of construction, indoor air quality and environmental issues. Your front line for checking the signs and symptoms of radon related concerns. We want Standards and protocols to follow...and would participate to give feedback into our field reality.

There are great advantages to our dialogue. Our field tests in real estate transactions promote not only more frequent testing following a set protocol, but also more water testing and mitigation of both air and water problems as a result of the readings found.

Even if we were to ignore the significant financial implications of a growing industry fired by consumer concern and just focus on the health related benefits... more testing quickly points to *more homes being mitigated before a family will spend years living in a potentially unsafe environment.* It give confidence to the new home buyer that the home is safe and a good value.

As the largest and most influential Home inspection organization ASHI and it's 5800 members and candidates are looking to add radon testing protocols and standards of testing, reporting and write-ups in a hard form in order to gain more consistency across the nation.

With the communication avenues established over the past few years, and as AARST assumes it's role to lead the industry the new standards should be written with agreements that real estate transactions will be bound to follow.

As the EPA and ASHI worked together to develop inspection criteria for radon mitigation equipment so also will we need to develop standards for proper disclosure, and proper information to go out to Realtors sellers and buyers.

In Ct., the two ASHI chapters met with Frank Homski and the State of Ct. over a year ago to develop a statewide information letter and reaffirm the protocol for real estate radon tests.

To this day testing still wavers on technique depending on who is performing the test. The perceptions of many Realtor's is that testing is so bogus that the inconsistencies of the testing technique (location, placement, whether windows are open or not...etc.) That the home can show a differing result each time it is tested.

On the other hand, many home inspectors feel frustrated that lack of concern and apathy toward appropriate testing could lead to more lawsuits as well as more lung cancer.

Many young couples given poor advice would rather save the money typically spent on testing for other options.

So... where are we... compared to last year at this time...

Licensing in Ct. and Mass are in place. About 24 other States are in the midst of licensing or legislative missions. Another 13 are considering it.

If a state becomes licensed the standards of ASHI are often copied by the state and become the State standard. If the state wants consistency they can demand compliance of the licensed inspectors to follow a set protocol. . They can require protocols be followed and mandate standards of testing, reporting and consulting. They can make it the law. If they don't have a protocol rest assured... they will make one up.

They can limit those testing to the licensed inspectors or leave the field open to testing companies and labs.

More importantly they can mandate reporting requirements. Which I feel would establish how many homes are tested, percentages of homes with elevated readings and percentages of homes mitigated for water and air. Follow up studies of health related occurrences can be *monitored and* programs developed if needed.

Data would finally be responsibly gathered, and not ignored.

ASHI & AARST should maintain open dialogue and promote standards and data collection. Tracking of homes all across North America may give us the information we need to deal with reduction of illness, and technological improvements that can help shape the testing and mitigation techniques. Both organizations should work toward a mutually agreeable partnership that starts with dialogue and ends with a new Standard for the industry.