Communicating with Confidence: Managing Tough Radon Questions

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Confidence comes from clarity, not certainty

- Listen to what the person is really asking
- Separate what we know from what we don’t
- Explain risk in understandable language
- Avoid exaggerating or minimizing risk
- Say “I don’t know” without losing credibility
- Give the person a useful next step

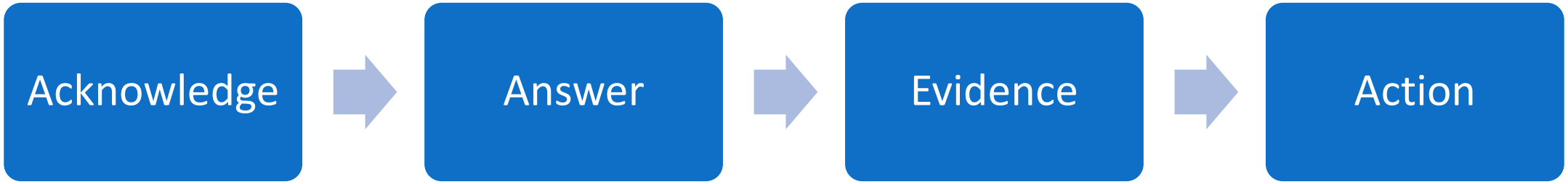
Simple Framework

HEAR

- H - Hear the Question
- E – Establish what matters
- A – Answer Simply
- R – Recommend the next step

Question: “My house tested at 6pCi/L. Should I be scared?”

Dealing with Push Back



My radon level is 3.9 pCi/L so I'm safe, right?

Example: "I understand why that sounds confusing. Four pCi/L isn't a line where 3.9 is safe and 4.1 is dangerous. Radon risk increases with long-term exposure, and EPA recommends fixing homes at or above 4 pCi/L and to consider fixing between 2 and 4. The useful questions isn't whether you should panic - it's what you can reasonably do to reduce your exposure."

Preparing for Discussion

- Message development
- Delivery
  - How do you sound?
  - What do you look like?
  - Identify the tough questions
- PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

Short Answer, Long Answer

THE STRUCTURE

Short answer. Deal with the question. Briefly. Tie a bow on it.

Long answer. Move into your three categories and stay there.

Examples:

- **Off-topic news event.** It was a great day for people across the country. I know we have some serious information to share, and in your local area I am glad to be here to talk about it.
- **Political question.** That is outside my lane. What we deal with is once the fires have already started, is giving people the best guidance we can to protect their health.
- **Workforce and staffing.** Yes. Full stop, then straight into the mission.
- **Not your subject.** I am not the person put out to speak on that. What I can tell you is...
- **Factually wrong premise.** You are close on that, but that is not quite accurate. Here is what we can tell you today.

Message Road Map

Category 1	Category 2	Category 3

The Power of “I Don’t Know”

“I don’t know” can increase credibility.

Weak: “I don’t know.”

Risky: Guessing because you feel pressure to answer.

Confident: “I don’t know that answer to that specific question, and I don’t want to speculate. Here’s what I do know…”

Or:

“That’s a good question that requires a more technical answer than I can give you confidently right now. Let me verify it.”

Style and Presence

- Head. Hands. Body
- Where to Look
- Voice
  - Low Talkers/Loud Talkers
  - Project
- TV Smile

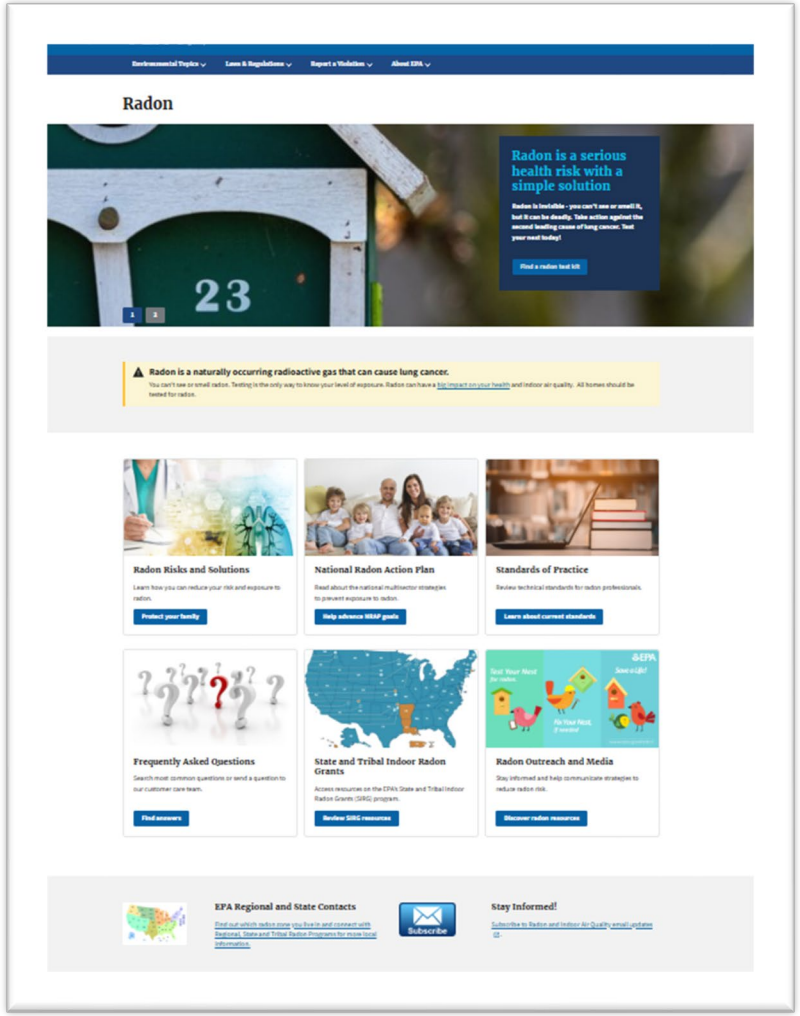
SITUATION	WHERE YOUR EYES GO
Reporter standing beside the camera	Look at the human. This is the most common field setup.
Studio with a host in the room	Look at the human, unless they tell you otherwise.
Satellite, remote, Teams, Zoom	Look at the camera lens, not the screen. This is the hard one and it is the one that matters most for this office.
Press Conference, Public Meeting	At the audience and allow your eyes to move across the crowd. If you have a message directly for the TV audience look into the cameras.
Not sure	Ask. Where would you like me to look is a completely normal question and it is inside your control.

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

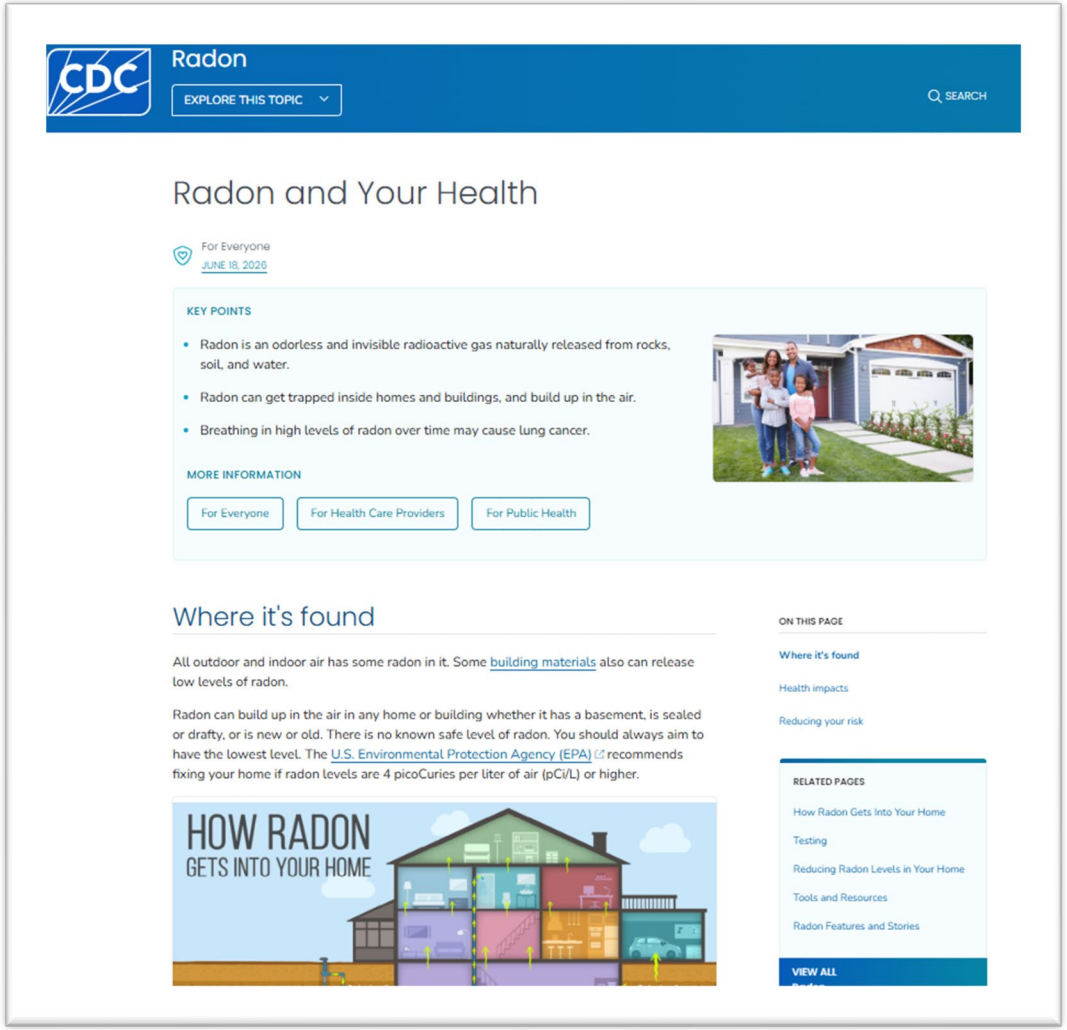
- Draft your messages
- Film yourself
- Playback and watch with family/friends
- Film yourself again



Resources



EPA Radon https://www.epa.gov/radon



CDC Radon https://www.cdc.gov/radon/index.html

Contact Us

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