



NAUGATUCK VALLEY HEALTH DISTRICT RADON REPORT - 2013

Date of Report: 12/12/13

Background:

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States¹. Radon is the number one cause of lung cancer among non-smokers and is responsible for about 21,000 lung cancer deaths each year. According to the Community Health Profile², in 2008 the incidence rates of lung cancer in the Naugatuck Valley (100 per 100,000 persons) were significantly higher than Connecticut's three major cities (Bridgeport, Hartford, and New Haven) and the State of Connecticut overall. Within the NVHD jurisdiction, Derby (n=145) and Beacon Falls (n=121) recorded the highest rates of lung cancer, again exceeding the States total of 75 per 100,000. According to the ValleyCARES Quality of Life Report³, among the cancer deaths reported, lung cancer was the most diagnosed among the Valley Community. Furthermore, 64% of residents reported their homes have not been tested for Radon.

Health Effects:

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that comes from the breakdown of uranium which is found in soil and rock all over the US. Radon is colorless, odorless, and tasteless. When exposed to Radon, the gas can break down into particles, damaging cells that line the lungs and increasing the risk of developing lung cancer over the course of a lifetime. In general, cigarette smokers are at increased risk of developing lung cancer compared to non-smokers. Exposure to the combination of Radon gas and cigarette smoke creates an even greater risk of lung cancer than exposure to either factor alone. According to the National Cancer Institute⁴, the majority of Radon related cancer deaths occur among smokers, however it is estimated that more than 10% of radon related cancer deaths occur among non-smokers.

Method:

Naugatuck Valley Health District staff provided a radon screening and awareness program for residents in the jurisdiction during the first quarter of 2013. Staff recorded the number of Radon test kits distributed in the community on a reporting sheet provided from the CT Department of Public Health (CT DPH). This sheet documents the individual's name, home

¹ A Citizens Guide to Radon. May 2012. <http://www.epa.gov/radon/pdfs/citizensguide.pdf>

² The Community Health Profile. 2009 – 2012. <http://nvhd.org/admin/resources/2009-2010communityhealthprofile.pdf>

³ ValleyCARES Quality of Life Report. 2012. <http://nvhd.org/admin/resources/valleycaresfullreport.pdf>

⁴ Radon and Cancer. National Cancer Institute. 12/06/2011. <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/factsheet/Risk/radon>



address, and the Radon test kit number. All Radon test kits disseminated in the community are documented on the reporting sheet and submitted to CT DPH. It is the responsibility of the individual receiving the radon test kit to conduct the radon test and send it to the laboratory specified on the kit. Once the test kit is sent to the lab for analysis, both the consumer and the CT DPH Radon Program receive the test results. The CT DPH Radon Program compiles the results per municipality in CT and submits the results to the local health departments. NVHD draws the data particular to its jurisdiction to analyze and compile a report.

Total number of radon test kits distributed by Naugatuck Valley Health District per municipality (January through March 2013):

Ansonia: 10

Beacon Falls: 4

Derby: 8

Naugatuck: 0

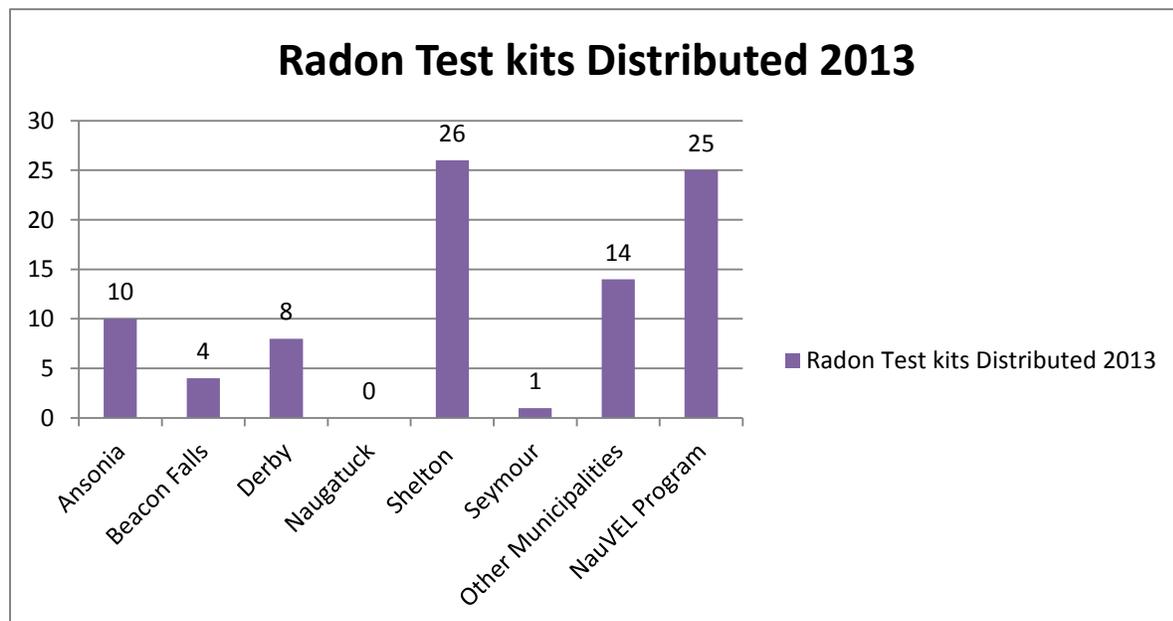
Shelton: 26

Seymour: 1

Other: 14

NauVEL*: 25

Total kits distributed: 88





Results

Forty-nine (49) radon test kits were distributed to the six (6) member municipalities of the Naugatuck Valley Health District. An additional fourteen (14) kits were provided to individuals outside of the health district municipalities. The NauVEL (Naugatuck Valley Emends Lead) program is a HUD funding program coordinated through the Health District. This program was provided with 25 test kits to distribute to clients (more information on the NauVEL program can be found at www.nvhd.org/nauvel/).

Conclusion:

Over time, exposure to radon can lead to serious public health implications. Although a simple test can indicate if radon levels have reached dangerous levels in the home, data from the community health assessment indicates over 60% of Valley residents have not tested their homes for radon.

Compared to the previous radon action month activities, NVHD distributed fewer test kits in 2013 (n=88) compared to the 2012 year (n=117). A best practice over the past two years is the partnership with Shelton High School. This is a dual approach in which education on radon and its potential health effects are presented in the classroom. Students then take this information to educate the community and provide free test kits to residents during school events. Challenges included the dissemination of test kits at local libraries. Although over 30 test kits were distributed in collaboration with the local libraries in 2013, it was noted that fewer residents came to the libraries for radon test kits compared to 2012. The number of calls to the health department from residents for radon test kits was also less than the previous year. Additional community outreach and promotion, as well as earlier dissemination of event information in the community, may increase these numbers. As part of radon action month activities in 2014, NVHD will expand its outreach efforts and will approach additional schools throughout the district for participation.