



## NAUGATUCK VALLEY HEALTH DISTRICT RADON REPORT - 2015

Date of Report: 2/25/2015

### **Background:**

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States<sup>1</sup>. 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 Profile<sup>2</sup>, 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 Report<sup>3</sup>, 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 Institute<sup>4</sup>, 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 2015. 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

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

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

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

<sup>4</sup> 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 (February 2015):***

Ansonia: 16

Beacon Falls: 4

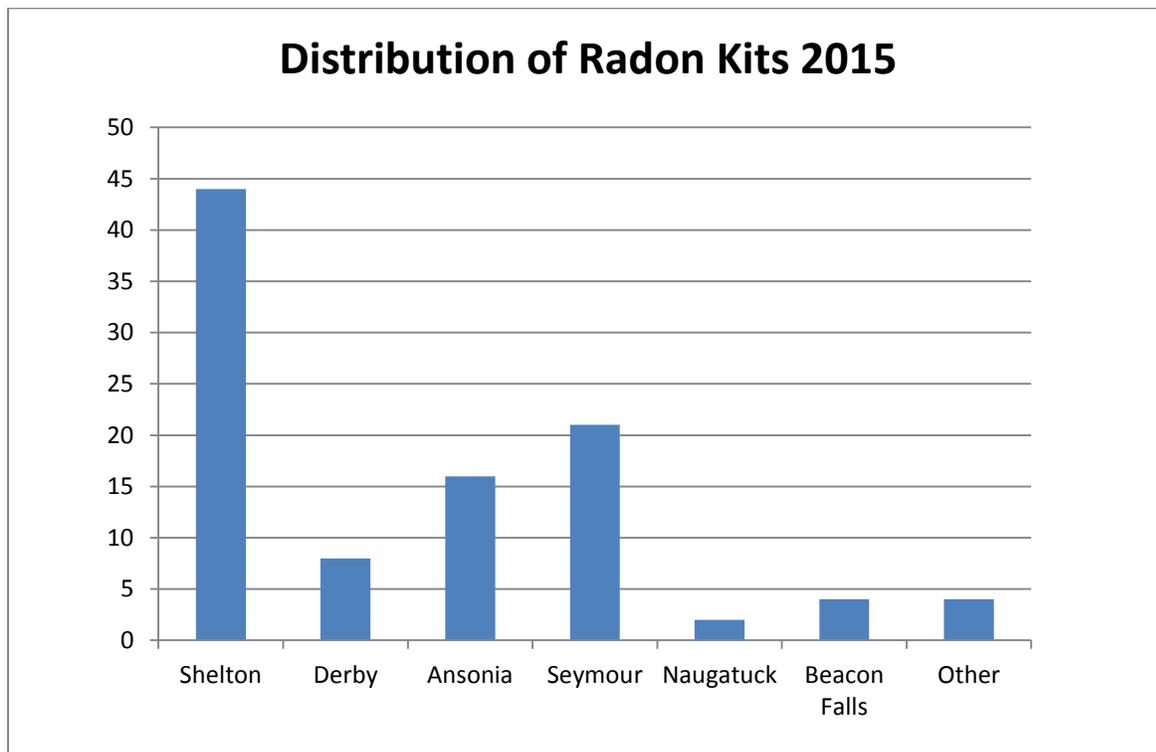
Derby: 8

Naugatuck: 2

Shelton: 44

Seymour: 21

Other: 4



Total kits distributed: 99

### Results

Ninety five (95) radon test kits were distributed to the six (6) member municipalities of the Naugatuck Valley Health District. An additional four (4) kits were provided to individuals outside of the health district municipalities. The radon kits were marketed through the NVHD website, NVHD's Facebook, New Haven Register, and Shelton Patch. The public health specialist went to Ansonia, Shelton, Naugatuck and Seymour libraries to distribute the kits. Some kits were also picked up at the front office of NVHD.

### 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 more test kits in 2015 (n=99) compared to the 2013 year (n=88). In 2013, disseminating the radon test kits was a challenge. This year, it was a best practice and 75% of kits were distributed at various libraries throughout the Valley. The Health District received several calls and 25% of the kits were



picked up from residents at NVHD this year. All radon kits were collected from the health district within three weeks are promoting the campaign. The campaign was a big success and all residents that collected a radon kit were sent a post card as a reminder to use the kit in their homes. The post card was sent two weeks after the radon kits were distributed and hopefully that will help collect the most results. When results are received, the public health specialist will follow up with residents whose tests were high.