



Eco-Healthy Child Care

Eco-Healthy Child Care ensures early childhood learning environments are as healthy, safe and green as possible by reducing children's exposure to toxic chemicals.



Radon

Health Concerns

- Radon is the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers.
- Claiming approximately 20,000 lives annually, radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in America.
- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) lists indoor radon as one of the most serious environmental health problems in the U.S.

What Is Radon?

Radon is a natural gas that you can't see, smell, or taste. It is produced by the natural breakdown of uranium in soil and water. Uranium is found in soils worldwide, with some areas having higher concentrations than others. According to the EPA, the average indoor radon level in the United States is about 1.3 picocuries per liter (pCi/L).

Any building can have a radon problem. Radon gets into a building by moving up through the ground and then through cracks and holes in the foundation. Buildings can trap radon, which can lead to harmful concentrations indoors. It is imperative that each child care facility test their building for radon to be sure children and staff are safe.

Radon and Children

- Children have smaller lungs and therefore higher breathing rates.
- Children spend up to 70% more time indoors than adults on average.
- Radon-related lung cancer is correlated with a person's total lifelong exposure.
- According to the EPA, a nationwide survey estimates that 1 in 5 schools has at least one schoolroom with a radon level that exceeds recommended levels.

Reducing Your Exposure to Radon

- The EPA and the office of the Surgeon General recommend that all homes be tested. If your average indoor radon level measures at or above 4.0 pCi/L, take action to reduce it.
- Fixing buildings to reduce radon exposure may entail sealing cracks in the foundation or ventilating the area.

How to Test for Radon

The National Radon Program Services has test kits available for purchase (\$15 and up): call 1-800-SOS-RADON or visit www.sosradon.org.

Common test kits:

- charcoal canisters (short term, 2-7 days)
- e-perm (short/long term)
- alpha track detectors (long term, 91-365 days)
- charcoal liquid scintillation devices

When using a short-term test kit:

- Follow the directions of the kits closely since the length of time the kits can remain open varies.
- Place the test kit in the basement or lowest-lived-in level of a home, school, or child care.
- Ensure the test kit is placed midlevel, not too close to ground or ceiling (place on top of a book shelf or dresser).
- Be careful not to disturb the test kit until testing is finished.
- After the specified amount of time, mail the kit to the manufacturer to be analyzed.

- Since radon levels vary every day, it's best to do two short-term tests for at least 48 hours. This is best done either at the same time or one after another to obtain an average.
- Test your child care facility and home every two years or following a significant renovation.
- If your facility has a radon level of 4 pCi/L or more contact your state radon office www.epa.gov/radon/wherelive.html for assistance.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Call: 202-543-4033, ext. 13
Email: info@ecohealthychildcare.org
Visit: www.cehn.org/ehcc

Radon Resources

- US Environmental Protection Agency
www.epa.gov/radon
- National Safety Council
www.nsc.org/resources/issues/radon/index.aspx
- National Environmental Health Association: Radon Mitigation Providers by Area
www.radongas.org/Description_of_Radon_Mitigation_Services.html
- Coupon for radon test kit
www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/rps/radon/docs/radoncoupon.pdf

A recipient of EPA's Children's Environmental Health Excellence Award in 2006, Eco-Healthy Child Care (EHCC) is a national program that seeks to improve the environmental health of children by partnering with child care professionals to eliminate or reduce environmental health hazards found in child care facilities. Originally created by the Oregon Environmental Council in 2005, EHCC is now managed by Children's Environmental Health Network.