Radon Awareness

Winter is in full swing and it is wonderful to have some snow! I was getting ready to deploy my winter watering article and have tot pivot this morning which is great.

I always hope that when I talk about watering landscape plants in the winter it gets Mother Nature’s attention and send moisture our way. I am hoping the forecast holds true and it is snowing while you read this!

It is the time of year of frozen ground and spending more time in the warm house. For these reasons I felt it appropriate to write about radon. According to the EPA, Dolores County is listed as High Radon Potential.

It is important to be aware of radon and the things that can be done to limit radon exposure. Winter is the season when radon exposure can be more common for many people and I will explain why.

First, what is radon and why do we car?

Radon is a colorless odorless gas that occurs naturally from uranium that exists in the soil. The soil in the Dolores County area are conducive to radon mainly because of the granite and shale components.

Radon is naturally released into the air form the soil. Radon levels are commonly measured in the unit picocuries per liter or pCi/L. Why to we care Radon is one of the most serious environmental health threats.

According to the Surgeon General radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer next to smoking.

Winter time tends to be the time when radon exposure is greatest for most people for two main reason.

The first has to do with frozen surface soils that will not allow the radon to escape into the air. When this happens the radon will find its way into the warmer soils around a building foundation or basement and seep into the building through cracks. Therefore the radon levels in a given building will be greatest in the basement and lower in upper levels.

The level to be higher in the winter time. The second reason is that in the winter people tend to spend more time inside.

For the reason stated above, radon testing should occur when soils are frozen to get a measurement that is meaningful to you.

Radon test kits are readily available at many hardware stores, are inexpensive and are easy to use. The test consists of placing the kit in a lower level living area in a house with limited ventilation for a period of about three days.

The kit is then sent to a lab and the results are sent back to you.

The results of this test can then be used to make decisions. If the test results show a radon level 4 pCi/L or greater the EPA recommends that radon mitigation measures be taken. These measures can be as simple as an increase in ventilation or sealing cracks in a basement.

Radon levels are specific to each building. The radon level in your house may be very different form your next door neighbor’s level. Testing is important because it can bring a problem to light that people may not have known existed. If high levels are discovered there are mitigation strategies that are possible for just about any building and budget.

**Announcements: The Western Colorado Cattle and Forage Grower Update** will happen on January 26th & 28th from 10:00 am until Noon both days!

*Information provided by CSUCE and Dolores County.*

For further information concerning these topics or any other subject, stop in or call Gus, Oma and Joey at the Colorado State University Dolores County Extension Office, 677-2283. Cooperative Extension programs are available to all without discrimination.