

IRISH NATIONAL RADON FORUM

Ardilaun House Hotel

Galway

16 November 2006

Is the health of Irish Workers
adequately protected from the
effects of radon gas?

RATIONALE

- 2nd most important risk factor after smoking for lung cancer worldwide
- Radon now most important risk factor in indoor workplaces
- 150-200 lung cancer deaths linked to radon
- 73 workplace accidents
- 399 fatalities on the road

OBJECTIVES

- Assess awareness of, and compliance with legislation governing radon
- Assess availability of advice and guidance on radon
- Compare regulation in Ireland v UK
- Compare regulation of Radon and ETS

METHODOLOGY

- Questionnaire to 100 workplaces
- Telephone Survey
- Sent also via e-mail and post
- 58% response rate

SECTORS SURVEYED

- Public Sector
- Industrial/manufacturing – Includes IDA & Enterprise Ireland Companies
- Financial & other Business Services

QUESTIONNAIRE

- Type of business
- No of employees
- When built
- Floor level business operates on
- No of employees at ground & basement

QUESTIONNAIRE

- Is your workplace located in a High Radon Area?
- Are you aware of the legislation governing radon in the workplace?
- Has radon been identified as a hazard to health & safety in your workplace?
- Has it been included in your Safety Statement?
- Has the level been measured in your workplace?

RESPONSE

- 7 Public sector – 2140 employees
- 17 IDA - 2113
- 17 EI - 362
- 17 Services – 206
- Total employees covered by survey – 4821
- Total potentially exposed - 3352

Workplace in HRA

- Overall 50% didn't know in HRA
- 71% Public Sector aware
- 64% IDA aware
- 65% EI unaware
- 71% Services unaware

Awareness of Legislation

- 43% of workplaces surveyed stated that they were unaware
- 100% of Public Sector aware
- 65% of IDA aware
- 76% of EI unaware
- 47% of Services unaware

Radon identified as a H&S Hazard

- Overall 48% of workplaces surveyed had not
- 28% did not know if they had or not

- 71% of Public Sector identified
- 59% of IDA identified

- 88% of EI had not
- 76% of Services didn't know and 24% had not

Radon in Safety Statement

- Overall 64% had not included radon in Safety Statement
- 71% of Public Sector
- 35% of IDA
- 12% of EI
- 12% of Services

Level of Measurement carried out

- 58% had not carried out any measurement
- 71% of Public Service
- 47% of IDA
- 6% of EI
- 12% of Services Sector

Difference in Sectors

- Awareness & Compliance higher in Public Sector - Suggest due to Initiative by State Claims Agency
- Awareness higher in IDA than EI companies - Suggest H&S higher profile, dedicated H&S personnel
- Awareness lowest in EI & Services Sectors - smaller nos of employees, may not be econ feasible to have dedicated H&S personnel

Availability of Advice on Radon

- Websites of H.S.A., Local Councils and HSE accessed
- CSO figures show 78% of Industry and 38% of Services use ICT
- Also contacted by phone

Availability of Advice on Radon - Results

- No info on H.S.A. website
- No info on Local Councils websites
- No info on HSE website
- When contacted by phone all referred to RPII or private radon lab

Regulation in Ireland

- H.S.A – SHWW Act, general duty to protect health and safety
- H.S.A. stated all indoor workplaces in HRA must be measured for radon
- No programme of routine inspection for radon
- RPII – RPA 1991 (IR) Order 2000 - no general duty to measure radon
- Only required to measure if directed by RPII, rarely come in contact with employers

Regulation in Ireland (contd)

- HSE & DoHC – no role, yet health issue, lung cancer leading type of cancer causing death, body of HSE inspectors going into workplaces to look at other indoor pollutant i.e. ETS
- Benefit to extend remit within these workplaces to promote radon as a ph issue and possibly enforce legislation
- Local Authority – enforcement of Building Regs

Regulation in UK

- HSE – factories, schools, hospitals, mines
- LA - shops, offices, warehouses, call centres and hotels by EHO's
- Radon testing required in all premises in HRA during routine inspections
- Enforcement Officers in regular contact with employers
- Testing can be required by Improvement Notice under H&SAW ACT
- H&S Awareness Officers employed to advise SME's

Regulation of ETS

- 35,000 inspections of workplaces by HSE EHO's
- Health premises, hospitals, schools, State buildings, cinemas, theatres, pubs, clubs, places of indoor entertainment
- 95% of workplaces complied
- 38 prosecutions in 2005

Regulation of Radon

- 1/3 of Ireland in HRA
- 60% of total radiation dose
- 8 prosecutions for failure to measure after direction by RPII
- No prosecutions under Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act

CONCLUSIONS

- Health of Workers not protected
- Employers not complying with legislation
- Enforcement inadequate
- Radon not included in regular inspections by H.S.A and therefore not seen as a priority for employers

RECOMMENDATIONS-AWARENESS

- HSE take radon on board and address it as a public health issue in partnership H.S.A., RPII and Local Authorities
- H.S.A., Local Authorities, HSE provide advice on radon and target SME's

RECOMMENDATIONS - COMPLIANCE

- Radon be included in all routine H&S inspections
- Enforcement action be taken under SHWW Act 2005
- EHO's be authorised to enforce legislation governing radon



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