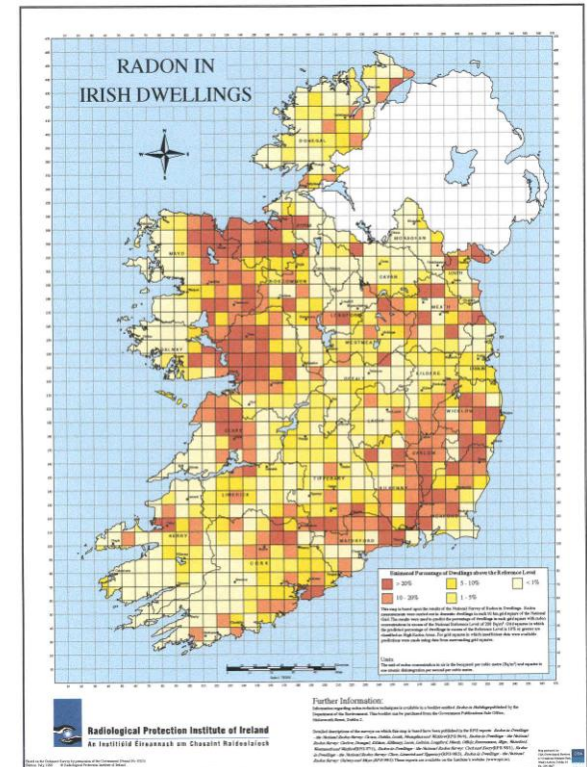


# Stakeholder input to national radon control Strategy

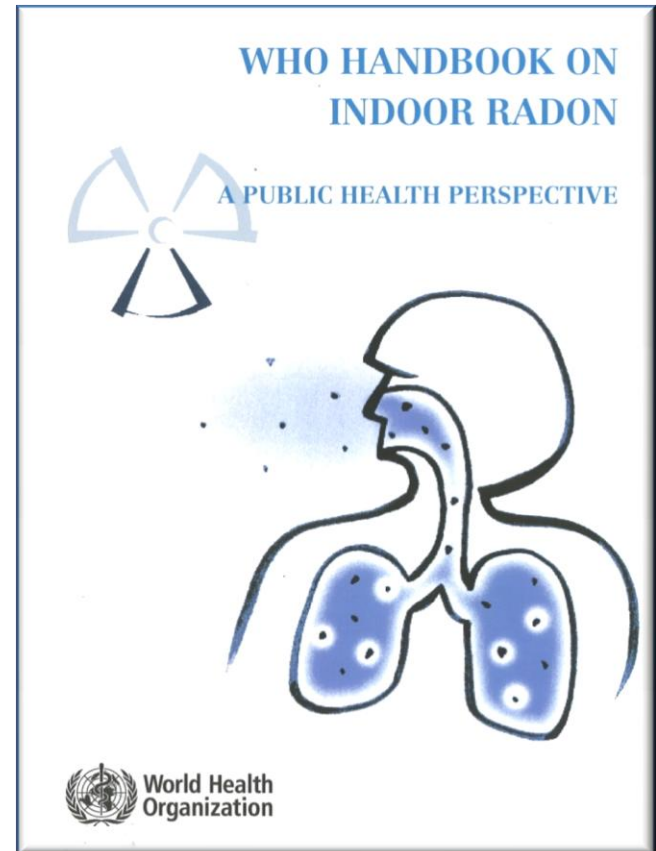


David Pollard  
(Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland)

- ✓ Purpose of the consultation
- ✓ What are the consultation priorities
  - ✓ What the process might look like
- ✓ What you as stakeholders can expect

# Where are we now?

- 2006 - RPII Radon action plan identified the need for a coordinated approach.
- 2009 - WHO handbook published which sets out guidelines on national radon strategies.
- 2010 - RPII/ HSE joint position statement on radon calls for the establishment of expert group to develop national radon control strategy.
- Revision of EU Directive on radiation protection standards is likely to require MS to have national radon strategies.



# Where are we now?

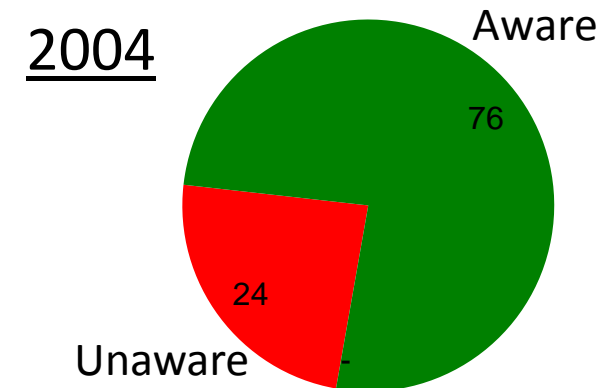
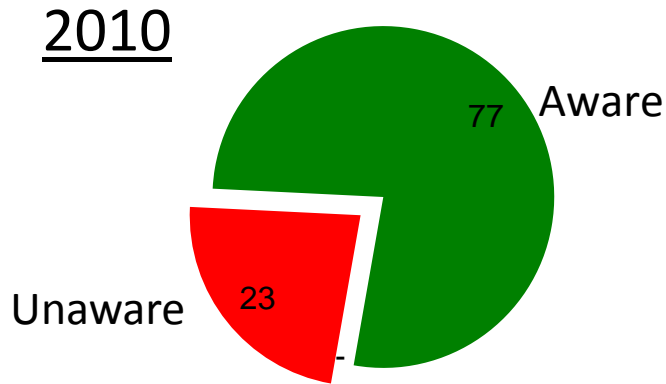
- Progress on radon to date has been mixed
  - excellent in some areas (radon map, schools, social housing, etc) and
  - disappointing in others (rates of measurements and remediation in private housing).
- A number of elements of a strategy in place but now need to bring these together



# Previous stakeholder consultation

- National omnibus survey measured awareness of radon in 2004 and 2010
- Focus group research in 2010
- RPII customer questionnaire (experience of remediation, remediation rate, awareness of building regulations, etc)
- Joint Oireachtas Committee survey of Local Authorities
- National radon forum

# Awareness of radon



- High levels of awareness
- Relatively low levels of concern (47% - 43%).
- Awareness and concern do not translate into action.

# Focus group research 2010

- Aimed to explore reasons why people are slow to act on radon.
- Focus groups recruited from representative home owners who had some awareness of radon but had not tested.
- Research conducted in Tralee and Carlow in 2010.



# Focus group conclusions

- High awareness of radon but poor understanding of the issues.
- Not an instant killer, can't identify individuals killed by radon – therefore people defer action.
- Concern that remediation will cause major disruption, effect value of house, fear of being taken advantage of, etc
- Message not perceived as coming from Government “if it is the second biggest cause of lung cancer then why is the Government not doing something about it”

# Many common misunderstandings

I have a standby sump therefore I don't need to measure

I regularly open my windows therefore I don't have a radon problem

Will radon affect my asthma?

remediation is very disruptive

risks small compared to other risks such as carbon monoxide

Lack of understanding of the issues makes the problem difficult to deal with. The prospect, for example, of selecting a contractor to fix a problem you "can't see" and "don't understand" can be daunting.

Aim of the consultation is to involve stakeholder is the development of national radon control strategy.

## Consultation to focus on 4 priority areas

- Rate of testing in homes
- Rate of remediation in homes found to have high levels
- Radon prevention in new build
- Effective prevention in workplaces

# Rate of testing of private homes

- The rate of measurement is low ( $\approx 5\%$  of private homes to date). At current rates it would take 400 years to measure the Irish housing stock.
- Current strategy depends largely on persuading and encouraging individuals to test – is there a better way?
- How can we make our case more persuasive?
- Are there particular issues we need to address (perception of the risk, cost, concerns over remediation, trust in contractors, etc)?

# Remediation rates

- Where houses are found to have high levels, rate of remediation is low ( $\approx 25\%$ ), which is inline with international experience.
- High level of awareness but poor understanding of the issues even among some professionals.
- Are there particular concerns we need to address (disruption, cost, trust in contractors, value of house, etc)?
- Is there more we can do to better support householders (not necessarily financially)?



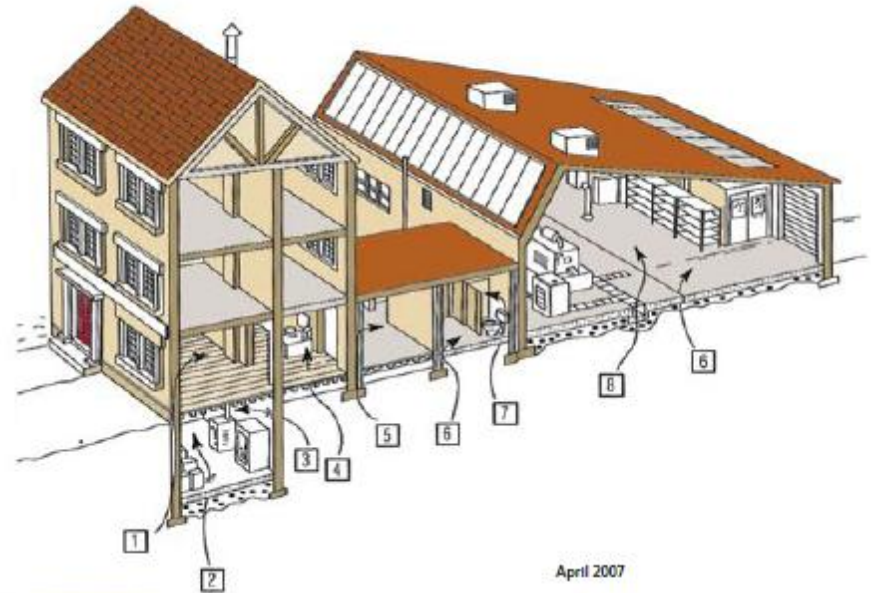
# Radon prevention in new build

- Irish and international evidence shows that barriers can reduce average radon. However, effectiveness is heavily dependent on quality of installation.
- Is there more we can do to improve and assure the quality of radon barrier installation?
- Technical Guidance Doc C recommends post construction measurement – however it is clear that this is generally not happening. The purpose of the standby sump is widely misunderstood.
- Is there a need to expand or change the current guidance?

# Radon in workplaces

- While radon exposure occurs predominantly in the home, it is important to address workplaces also.
- Radon raised by HSA during H&S inspections.
- Significant progress has been made in certain sectors (State workplaces, large employers)
- Progress on small workplaces is less clear.
- Focus is on persuasion and education – is this the right approach?

Typical Entry Routes into a Building



# Why Stakeholder Engagement

- Ensure practicability of any measure we may recommend
- Ensure available knowledge and experience is channelled into strategy
- Stakeholder buy in to the strategy

# Stakeholders

## Building Industry

Radon measurement  
and remediation companies  
Builders, architects, etc  
Solicitors, insurers, etc  
Representative organisations

## Public

Householders  
Employers  
Employees/ unions

## Governmental

Local authorities  
Health professionals  
Central Government/ agencies

# Approach

- Significant work already undertaken on public consultation.
- Questionnaires aimed at specific stakeholder groups. Questionnaires to include open questions around each of the priority issues to prompt views and input.
- Interested in ideas rather than statistics.
- Follow up through bilaterals and workshops to drill down on specific issues.
- All input welcome

# Key stakeholder groups

- Radon measurement and remediation companies
- Groups related to the construction industry such as: Homebond, The Guild of Master Craftsmen, the Royal Institute of Irish Architects, the Irish Building Control Institute, the Building Regulations Advisory Board and others.
- Local authorities.
- Employer groups, unions, health & safety professionals, Office of Public Works, State Claims Agency, Local Authority Safety Advisors Group and others.

# Finally

- Are there other key stakeholders?
- Are there issues we are missing? Are the priorities issues correct?
- Any other thoughts or reactions?
  
- Timing of consultations.
- If you think of anything afterwards-  
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