

August 29, 2016

Dear City of Fernie Building Users,

RE: City of Fernie Radon Action & Recommendation for Household Testing

As part of the City of Fernie's ongoing commitment to the health and safety of our visitors and staff, radon gas screening has been completed throughout City buildings, with the assistance of Interior Health. Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that is formed by the breakdown of uranium in soil and rock. Most buildings and homes that are in contact with the ground will contain some amount of radon gas. Some buildings in Canada – including those in British Columbia - have higher concentrations of radon gas in their lower levels (basements and ground level main floors). The Canadian Guideline action level for radon is 200 Bq/m³. Following testing, the majority of results for radon levels within City buildings were found to be below this level. However elevated levels were detected in the basements of the Library, City Hall, and Curling rink. The results are provided as an attachment to this letter.

Long term exposure to radon increases the risk of developing lung cancer. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer after smoking. . It is important to emphasize that not everyone exposed to radon will develop cancer. The risk depends on the concentration of radon in the air you breathe and the length of time you are exposed. It is important to note that a person's exposure at a City of Fernie building represents only a portion of their exposure over time.

Health Canada recommends that effort be placed toward getting the levels to as low as reasonably achievable. As such, the City of Fernie has immediately sought the services of a certified expert in radon gas mitigation who is developing an action plan for lowering the levels. Once the action plan is in place, it will be shared with all building users.

In the interim, for areas above the guideline action level, the City of Fernie is implementing temporary measures to lower the radon levels, which include limiting access to affected areas, opening windows, and increasing ventilation. Once the action plan has been implemented, further tests will be conducted to confirm that lower levels have been achieved. Health Canada and Interior Health recommend testing workplaces, schools, and households for radon. The City of Fernie is taking action for City owned buildings, and we encourage everyone to test their home where more indoor time is likely spent.

The East Kootenay region is known to have high radon levels which can vary widely, even in the same neighborhood. In general, radon concentrations tend to be highest in the lowest levels of a building, including basements during the cold months of the year.

Radon testing kits can be ordered through the BC Lung Radon Aware website <http://www.radonaware.ca/> or by calling 1-800-665(LUNG).

For more information about Radon please check out the following links posted on the Interior Health Radon Page www.interiorhealth.ca/RadonGas.

If you have general questions about radon, please contact the Interior Health, Healthy Built Environment Team at hbe@interiorhealth.ca or call toll free at 1-855-744-6328 ext. 4.

For more information on the City of Fernie test results or next steps in these buildings, please contact Lloyd Smith, Director of Leisure Services at lloyd.smith@fernie.ca.

Sincerely,



Dr. Trevor Corneil
Chief Medical Health Officer
Interior Health



Lloyd Smith
Director of Leisure Services
City of Fernie