



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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SALEM, OR 97301

HB 2931 Combating Radon in Schools

The EPA ranks indoor radon among the most serious environmental health problems facing us today. After smoking, it is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States, and the highest leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers. According to the EPA, prolonged indoor radon exposure causes an estimated fourteen thousand (21,000) lung cancer deaths a year.

Radon is a naturally occurring gas that seeps into buildings from the surrounding soil. We cannot see, taste, or smell radon. In fact, the only way to discover if high levels of radon are present is through testing.

The EPA recommends that schools be tested periodically (they suggest every 10 years) for radon, since they are places where children, teachers, and other school personnel spend hours each day. Since radon levels can vary within short distances, the EPA recommends the testing of all frequently used rooms on and below ground level.

Some school districts in Oregon have been aggressive in testing their buildings, but not all of them have been able to do so, even though the test kits are inexpensive (\$4 per room) when purchased in bulk. Because some schools may not have tested due to cost, and because we all have an interest in making sure that children are not exposed to this health hazard, HB 2931 requires Oregon Health Authority to provide the cost of the actual test kits and training in how to test.

We encourage districts to mitigate rooms that show excessive radon, but not require them to do so. If they do, that will be at district expense, unless the state sees a compelling need to support mitigation in the future. If the school chooses to mitigate, OHA will also provide follow-up test kits to ensure that the mitigation has been successful.

The goal is to keep the process as simple and inexpensive as possible for the districts, while allowing them to benefit from the expertise and oversight of the OHA.

