

15th NATIONAL RADON FORUM

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

Introduction

This document reviews the discussion session of the fifteenth National Radon Forum held in Dublin on 8th May 2019. It does not purport to be a comprehensive report of the day's proceedings and remarks attributed to individuals should not be interpreted as representative of the views or policy of the agencies represented.

The meeting was opened and chaired by Micheál Lehane, Director, Office of Radiation Protection and Environmental Monitoring, Environmental Protection Agency. The speakers and presentations were as follows:

Colman Hickey (Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment)

[Setting the Scene](#)

Stephanie Long (Environmental Protection Agency)

[National Radon Control Strategy Phase 2](#)

Alison Dowdall (Environmental Protection Agency)

[Knowledge Gaps Phase 2](#)

Simon McGuinness (Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government)

[Review of Technical Guidance Document C \(Site Preparation & Resistance to Moisture\)](#)

David Fenton (Environmental Protection Agency)

[Radon in Workplaces: New Legislation and Guidelines](#)

Sheena Notley (Health and Safety Authority)

[Radon in Workplaces: The HSA Perspective](#)

The reader is invited to view the presentations above which, with this report, should give a flavour of the topics discussed.

Discussion

Paul Egan (Department of Education and Skills) had a query regarding when the new radon map would be available. Alison Dowdall said that this is dependent on the outcome of the review of the TCD map currently being carried out by the EPA analytics team. This review is due to be completed in the coming weeks and any recommendations arising will need to be taken into consideration.

There was a query from Kevin Higgins (The Radon Barrier Co. Ltd) regarding sumps in newly built homes being capped off. Stephanie Long replied that Technical Guidance Document C sets out the requirement for a capped off standby sump in all newly built homes. Ms. Long added that there can be a misperception amongst householders that

the standby sump is reducing radon levels. She referred to research recently published by Public Health England which showed that a passive sump can reduce radon levels by approximately 30%. Dr. Mark Foley (National University of Ireland, Galway) confirmed that research by NUIG shows that passive sumps provide a reduction in radon levels.

Mr James McLaughlin (University College Dublin/European Radon Association) commented on the use of the word “natural” to describe radon. He said that while radon is natural, exposure to the gas in our buildings is a man-made problem. Stephanie Long agreed and said that the International Atomic Energy Agency no longer use the word natural to describe radon gas and pointed out that the EPA have removed the word “natural” from the radon.ie website and all guidance documents.

Regarding the survey offering financial incentives for radon testing and remediation, Kyle Carrick, (Health Services Executive, Northern Ireland) asked if the EPA had any insight into why householders decide not to follow through and take action to remediate. Alison Dowdall replied that there were a variety of reasons given with lack of concern being one of the main obstacles. She said that the next step is to work with behavioural economists to look at how information on radon testing and remediation can be presented to householders to optimise uptake rates.

Paul Egan (Department of Education and Skills) enquired about the use of the radon map to identify workplaces that are required to be tested. Alison Dowdall replied that under S.I. No. 30 of 2019, there is now a general duty on employers in High Radon Areas to test for radon and that the radon map is used to identify High Radon Areas. Tony McLaughlin (Radon Aware Group) asked if there were ethical issues with treating workplaces in High Radon Areas differently to those in other areas. Colman Hickey replied that S.I. 30 transposes the Euratom Basic Safety Standards directive which sets out the legislative requirements for workplaces in High Radon Areas to test.

José - Luis Gutiérrez Villanueva (Radonova) asked if the EPA had made a decision to use the new ICRP 137 dose conversion factors. David Fenton replied that the EPA awaits guidance from the European Commission on dose conversion factors due later in 2019. Mr James McLaughlin commented on the use of millisieverts for communicating radon risk to workers. He said it would be more meaningful to give predictions of the number of workers in a workplace who may get lung cancer. David Fenton pointed out that the EPA do not use millisieverts to explain the risk from radon to workers. He added that the biggest risk is from smoking and that the risk from radon is about 25 times greater for a smoker compared to a non- smoker.

Given that the common goal across the technical guidance documents is to optimise energy efficiency, David Pollard asked if potential synergies that would provide reductions in radon levels had been explored. Simon McGuinness replied that while parts A to M of the Technical Guidance Documents have an impact on radon levels, part F has the highest impact as it deals with internal ventilation adding that Part F needs to be considered in tandem with Part L – Conservation of fuel and energy. He said that research by Public Health England showed that internal ventilation provides a similar

reduction in radon levels to passive sumps. He pointed out that part F has undergone significant changes and that Ireland are the only country in the world to require on-site verification of flow rates for ventilation. He said that these changes will be very impactful on health statistics not only for radon but for other health pollutants.

Tony McLaughlin asked if consideration had been given to including an inspection of the radon membrane post installation and suggested that a test of the membrane be carried out. Simon McGuinness replied that he was unaware of any independent standard test that could be carried out on site. Tony McLaughlin said that he would send on information of a test that was developed in conjunction with Dublin Institute of Technology.