

HOUSING The Portland Observer

Study Shows High Radon Levels In Some Portland Homes

About one in every five homes in Portland may contain hazardous levels of radon, results from a recent Portland State University and Oregon Health Division study show. This is more than twice the U.S. rate or the rate for the state as a whole.

Radon is an odorless, colorless, radioactive gas that is released naturally into the environment from soil, rock and groundwater. Radon entry into homes is most likely to occur through the homes' foundation. In poorly ventilated areas, radon concentrations can increase to levels hazardous to human health.

"Oregon homes on the average have lower radon levels than the national average. Some areas in Portland and other parts of the state, however, have high levels," said Ray Paris, manager of the Oregon Health Division's radiation control section. "We're encouraging people to test their homes for radon."

The federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) attributes one in every seven cases of lung cancer in

the U.S. to radon gas exposure. EPA guidelines state that airborne radiation readings of more than 4 picocuries per liter can be hazardous to human health.

The recent study examined about 1,100 homes in 60 ZIP code areas throughout the Portland metropolitan area. Also, some northwest Oregon communities outside the Portland area were studied, but maps and complete data for those areas are not yet available.

In Portland, eight ZIP code areas show high radon potential, while another 15 ZIP code areas exhibit moderate potential, said Scot Burns, PSU associate professor of geology and coordinator of the study with Paris. Areas of northeast Portland, West Linn and north Hillsboro recorded the highest radon levels (above 4 picocuries per liter). Nearly half of the homes tested in northeast Portland's Alameda Ridge area recorded high radon levels.

"There's strong correlation between high indoor radon levels and areas with moderate to high soil permeability," said Stuart Ashbaugh, a PSU geology graduate student assist-

ing Burns with the project.

The Alameda Ridge has highly permeable soils that contain granitic sediments deposited 12,000 to 15,000 years ago by a major flood. Areas of West Linn and Hillsboro that recorded high radon levels probably are located near ancient faults, which act as conduits for radon reaching the surface, Burns said.

Radon levels may vary greatly within each neighborhood, depending on home construction and soil composition directly below each home. Homes situated on landslides or near faults have higher radon potential. Also, levels can vary widely within each home. Radon levels often are twice as high in basement areas compared to upstairs living areas.

"You could be in a ZIP code area with a high average radon level but live in a particular area that's geologically low in radon," said Burns. "That's why we're especially encouraging people living in areas recording moderate and high levels of radon to test their homes."

For the Portland study, scientists gathered radon readings in homes for a minimum of three months in vari-

ous locations within each test home. They categorized radon potential levels in all 60 Portland ZIP codes. In 39 ZIP code areas, enough homes were studied to make results valid. "More testing needs to be done in the remaining 21 ZIP codes before conclusive results can be obtained," said Burns.

The public can purchase EPA-approved radon test kits and test their own homes for \$20 to \$30. The Oregon Health Division's radiation control section has a list of EPA-approved testing companies that sell their test kits or provide radon testing services. If high radon levels are detected, the problem is relatively easy to correct with the installation of fans to recirculate air or by frequent opening of windows. Cost for correcting a radon problem typically ranges from \$300 to \$2,000.

Maps of radon potential areas and literature about radon are available to the public. A complete list of test results broken down by ZIP code is also available. For more information contact the Oregon Health Division, Radiation Control Section, Suite 705, 800 N.E. Multnomah St., Portland, OR 97232, or call 731-4272.

Facts Available On Deadly Radon Gas

A recent study on radio in the Portland area has homeowners looking for information on this potentially deadly gas. The American Lung Association of Oregon brochure "Facts About Radon," provides answers to the most important questions about this colorless, odorless killer. For your free copy, call 1-800-LUNG-USA.

Pageant Seeks Contestants

The first Miss Black World Beauty and Modeling Pageant will take place in Dallas, Texas for a week beginning Nov. 7. Pageant sponsors are accepting direct-entry applications from contestants throughout the nation. According to spokesperson Sandra Wells, "This will be the most rewarding and career beneficial pageant of its type ever conducted in America." To receive free applications write Miss Black World, P.O. Box 65001, Washington, D.C. 20035.

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Heaven Help Us

BY WILLIAM REED

When it comes to us gaining social and economic parity in America, the majority of us seem to be waiting for Jesus to come.

In this land of capitalism and free enterprise, the bulk of our kind continually refuse to do anything that makes economic sense when it comes to doing the type of things that can help more of us reach the American Dream. Ask any African American man or woman you see, "Do you know the meaning of capitalism and how it works?" and they will tell you, "Of course I do!" But then you should put the "outcome" statistics in front of them and ask, "Then how is that you expect our race to grow when in 1990 we spent only three cents of each of the \$300 billion we had in our collective pockets that year with each other?"

Even though statistically we know that black-owned-and-operated businesses have an established track record of hiring 80 to 90 percent of their employees from our community, why is it that they don't get the support they need from the black community? If we know so much about capitalism, why is it that the majority of us don't realize that unless we retain a larger percentage of our money in our communities and stimulate businesses and banks to create jobs and capital for us, we will always be slaves to others? The outcome for our earthly dreams is that we will have to exhibit our own self-help and independence or wait until Jesus comes again to save us.

Who among you doesn't believe

Earth Saving Message Brought To Portland

Captain Planet, the top animated defender of the planet, is spreading his message to Portlanders. His visits this summer include July 9 at the Washington Park Zoo Roar Faire from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Captain Planet, along with the five Planeteers, educate children about environmental issues such as bio-diversity, over-fishing and water and air pollution, and gives them the power to be part of the solution through recycling, planting trees, car-pooling and conserving water. They encourage young viewers through creative adventures in which the planeteers foil the schemes of villains who consume the earth's resources.

Whoopi Goldberg stars as Gaia, the spirit of the earth who summons the five planeteers from around the globe. LeVar Burton is the voice of Kwame, one of the planeteers. Other recurring roles are played by Edward Asner, James Coburn, Tim Curry, Jeff Goldblum, John Ratzberger, Martin Sheen, Sting and Dead Stockwell.

that Heaven helps those who help themselves? When are we going to look around and see the answer to our economic woes? Although Asians have less than 20 percent of the population numbers of African Americans, they have a record of spending 80 cents out of each of their dollars with each other. While Asians seem to go out of their normal way to buy from each other, the record shows that blacks seem to go out of their way to avoid their population, but they control three times their number in the nation's wealth. Jews also buy form each other, sell to each other and mostly hire only each other. Neither Jewish people, Asians or Arabs placed gaining their American on political empowerment the way we did. Neither Whites, Jews nor Asians consider politicians to be their "leaders," they simply us them as "public servants" to make, pass and enforce laws to enable them to have commerce as they wish.

We each have daily need that have to be addressed. When will we realize that the power of the consumer dollar,

that we spend every day, has more power over the direction of our collective lives than the political ballot? When will our experts in capitalism figure out that when we buy gas, shoes, cars or bread we are stimulating growth of jobs and commerce for someone else other than our own? When we buy gas, cars, bread or shoes from a Brother's Bailey's outlet, we are making the way for that black businessperson to hire and train one, or more, of us. Since the 1980s the number of black families making \$50,000 a year has increased from 762,000 to 1.2 million families and the numbers of those of us in managerial and professional specialty occupations grew from 1 million to nearly 2 million. But this has not helped the majority of blacks, because these African Americans took their money and investment potential and went to suburbia and its malls and split levels. The wealthier, and the not-so-wealthy blacks need to realize that when we save our money in a black bank, or invest in others of us in a theater or inner-city convenience store, we help all of us

ascend to a higher economic plane. On the other hand, the Lord knows that Divine help needs to be given to many black entrepreneurs. They have to learn effectively that in the land of capitalism and mutual support grows from mutual respect. Black business owners must move to make sure that those of us who come into their restaurants, service shops or dry cleaning establishments shouldn't have to stand in line or receive inferior products or service. Along with the product or service necessity that they provide and the vision and courage it takes to start off on the road to entrepreneurship, blacks in the business of serving other blacks will always have to be aware of our broad-based need for simple respect.

For a listing of 50 organizations, government agencies, franchisors and foundations that provide capital and other business resources, send \$5 to the International Exchange Network, 2054 National Press Building, Washington, D.C. 20045.

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