University of Nevada
Cooperative Extension

Public Comment: Nevada's 2017 Qualified Allocation Plan Workshop for Low-Income Housing Tax Credits – Sept. 1, 2016 10:00 a.m.

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension's Nevada Radon Education Program, Nevada Radiation Control Program at the Nevada Division of Public and Behavioral Health (NDPBH), the Nevada Comprehensive Cancer Control Program also at NDPBH, and the Nevada Cancer Coalition requests radon control efforts be included in the 2017 Qualified Allocation Plan.

Radon exposure is the second leading cause of lung cancer development. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, more cases of lung cancer are attributed to radon exposure than secondhand smoke, yet the majority of prevention efforts to reduce lung cancer focus on tobacco control alone. Tobacco control efforts are attributed to creating substantial decline in lung cancer rates. However, lung cancer rates remain unacceptably high, especially among the low-income populations. In order to continue decreasing the impact of lung cancer, prevention efforts must be enhanced to address additional risk factors, including radon exposure control.

Radon is a radioactive gas caused by the breakdown of uranium, thorium, and radium in rocks and soil. As the gas is released in the ground, it rises, and can eventually get into homes and buildings through cracks in floors, walls, foundations, and around piping and building materials. Exposure to radon can occur in nearly every type of home, including those that are well insulated, tightly sealed, and/or built on slab or crawl space foundations. Basements and first floors typically have higher radon levels because of their proximity to the ground, however, radon levels can be elevated on other floors as well.

The U.S. Surgeon General recommends every home be tested for radon, regardless of the average radon concentration of the area or the type of home or building. Testing is the only way radon can be detected in a building. Short-term screening detectors measure radon levels for 2 to 90 days, depending on the device used. Long-term tests determine the average radon concentration for more than 90 days. A long-term test is a more definitive indicator of the actual radon exposure level, as radon levels vary from day to day.

Radon testing is valuable in identifying elevated radon levels but does not eliminate the exposure. Fortunately, a number of strategies are available and effective in decreasing elevated radon levels in buildings. These include both radon exposure prevention through use of radon-resistant new construction (RRNC) methods when building a new home, or decreasing elevated radon levels via mitigation to existing homes.

The partners enumerated in this letter urge the committee to include the use of RRNC methods and radon mitigation systems for existing buildings in the 2017 Qualified Allocation Plan. In doing so, the committee will be doing a great service to one of Nevada's most vulnerable populations, and to all Nevadans in decreasing the burden of lung cancer statewide.

For additional information, please contact Susan Howe, program director, Nevada Radon Education Program, at robertss@unce.unr.edu or 775-336-0248, or the Nevada Radiation Control Program at 775-687-7550.

Sincerely,

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Attachment (1)

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Nevada Radon Education Program

A partnership of Nevada Counties, University of Nevada, Nevada Division of Public and Behavioral Health and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency