



Family and Consumer Sciences Extension

Indoor Air Quality Education 2007: Exposure to Environmental Contaminants in the Home

Learning for Life

The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension

The Problem

- Many Georgians are exposed to contaminants within their homes and near environment which can negatively impact their health, and thereby their quality of life. Of primary concern are polluted drinking water, poor air quality and toxic chemicals and/or gases such as lead, radon and asbestos.
- Scientific evidence indicates that the air people breathe inside their homes is often more contaminated than outdoor air. The impact of this is significant since people spend 90 percent of their time indoors.
- Sources of indoor air pollution include household products and chemicals (volatile organic compounds), carbon monoxide, formaldehyde, dust and dust mites, mold, asbestos, radon gas, lead and tobacco smoke.
- According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), indoor air quality problems in schools are responsible for triggering asthma related problems such as children's absenteeism and visits to the emergency room.³
- Asthma affects 19.8 million Americans, including more than 5 million children.¹
- Each year 21,000 people die from radon-related lung cancer in the United States.⁴
- In Georgia, close to 1,200 children under six who have been screened have an elevated blood lead level.²

Research-based Solutions

- Pollutant identification through various tests helps families single out pollutants, which create immediate adverse health symptoms.
- Source control helps prevent indoor air pollution by providing adequate ventilation or keeping the pollutant out of inside space.
- Mitigation measures serve to remove existing pollutants in the home.

Extension's Role

- Create an awareness of the availability of pollutant identification devices, source control practices and mitigation measures.
- Provide healthy indoor air classes/educational information for consumers through research-based solutions.

Extension's Contribution to Solving the Problem

- 133 *Indoor Air Quality* educational programs reached 6,604 Georgians. Additional individuals were reached with indoor air quality information via phone, office visits, site visits and other meetings.
- UGA Cooperative Extension distributed 4,661 radon test kits.
- Extension used mass media to educate thousands of Georgians on indoor air quality. 16 newspaper column articles reached 160,000 readers, 7 radio spots were broadcast to a listening audience of over 300,000, and 8 television interviews about radon had a viewing audience of 420,000.

Impact on Georgians

- Of the Georgians who received radon test kits, 1,469 tested their homes for radon, 297 had elevated radon levels (4.0pCi/L or higher), and many of these home were mitigated.

Sources:

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<http://www.cdc.gov/asthma/default.htm>). Accessed July 22, 2008.
2. Georgia Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (<http://health.state.ga.us/programs/lead/data.asp>). Accessed July 22, 2008.
3. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – Indoor Air Quality (<http://www.epa.gov/iaq/index.html>). Accessed July 22, 2008.
4. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency - Radon (<http://www.epa.gov/radon/>). Accessed July 22, 2008.

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