

Advice Sheet 7 - Radon And Uranium



Radon

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas, originating from uranium, which occurs in many types of rock. All water and air contains some radon, though levels are normally much too low to be of concern. For many years it has been recommended that if the concentration of radon in indoor air exceeds the action level of 200 Becquerels per cubic metre, steps should be taken to reduce it. It is now becoming recognised that some private water supplies contain concentrations of radon which should also be controlled.

The action level for radon in drinking water is 1000 Becquerels per litre. It has been recommended by the National Radiological Protection Board so that the risk to a typical person drinking water with radon at the concentration is similar to the risk which would arise from breathing air which contains radon at the action level of radon in air of 200 Becquerels per cubic metre. All exposures to radiation carry some risk, though the risks from low doses are small. The action level does not mark a boundary between safe and unsafe but rather a level at which action will usually be justified. Some people may choose to take action when the action level is approached.

Uranium

Uranium occurs naturally and is found in many of the rocks in Devon and Cornwall. The provisional World Health Organisation guideline value is 2 micrograms per litre. It *“represents the concentration of a constituent that does not result in any significant risk to health of the consumer over a lifetime of consumption”*. In other words, so far as the experts can judge, this very low concentration should not harm anyone drinking this water.

Testing and Treatment

Information about sampling and analysis of water for radon and the treatment methods available, may be obtained by contacting the Environmental Health Department of the Council.

For further advice or information, please view our website www.southhams.gov.uk or contact:

Environmental Health
South Hams District Council
Follaton House
Plymouth Road

Totnes
Devon TQ9 5NE

Telephone: 01803 861234

Fax: 01803 861294

Email: environmental.health@southhams.gov.uk

January 2006