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**Real Cost of Radon**By Gloria Linnertz, Founder, Citizens for Radioactive Radon Reduction

Lung cancer doesn’t play favorites. Lung cancer is the leading cancer killer in both men and women. It can happen despite your sex, age, race, religion, political affiliation, height, weight or skin tone. According to the American Lung Association, American Cancer Society, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an estimated 158,040 American citizens will die from lung cancer this year — more than colorectal, breast and prostate cancers combined.   
  
Very few people know that a leading cause of lung cancer which may be present in their homes is radioactive radon gas.   
  
Ten years ago, lung cancer took my husband Joe. Only afterwards did I discover that the likely cause was the presence of high levels of radon in our home. In the last 10 years, I’ve spoken to many legislators, given hun­dreds of presentations and talks about the danger of radioactive radon gas, and shared our story (Joe’s and mine) with people across the country. I’ve made this my mission because it is incredibly important that the public learn about the dangerous effects of radon and the actions that can be taken to prevent radon-related lung cancer.   
  
Studies completed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) show that radon is the number one cause of lung cancer among non-smokers. According to the EPA and other experts in the field of epidemiology, radon is estimated to be the reason 21,000 or more people die each year from lung cancer in the United States. The synergistic effect of smoking and radon gas exposure multiplies the chances of lung cancer.   
  
The problem is widespread. Millions of homes have elevated radon levels (4 pCi/L or more) and these elevated levels have been found in every state in our nation, although the problem is more common in certain states. For example, the EPA estimates that 70% of the people in Tennessee live in a high radon zone. Radon gas is emitted from the decay of uranium in the soil and rocks beneath structures like our homes, schools and work­places. The radon that is released from the earth can become trapped in the structure and the radon levels can reach danger­ous levels. Because the presence of radon cannot be detected by our human senses, the only way to detect its presence is to perform a simple test. High radon levels can be remediated by a certified professional mitigator. I also believe that state certi­fication of radon professionals is necessary for the protection of the public.   
  
In January 2016, the National Radon Action Plan was released, which is a combined effort of federal and non-government orga­nizations to make radon reduction standard practice to elim­inate avoidable radon-induced lung cancer.   
  
However, the real difference will be made when laws and regulations are passed to protect our citizens from radioactive radon exposure. After I discovered that my home had elevated levels of radon when my husband Joe was diagnosed with lung cancer, I educated the Illinois legislators about the danger of radon gas. The Radon Awareness Act was passed and has resulted in a 300 percent increase in the number of homes being tested in Illinois.   
  
For the last 10 years, I have dedicated myself to protecting our citizens from radon exposure. In the process, I’ve had the oppor­tunity to work with and hear from many who have shared their stories of how lung cancer invaded their lives due to high levels of radon in their indoor environments. This has only strength­ened my resolution to act. Through Citizens for Radioactive Radon Reduction and other like-minded organizations, we are raising awareness and pushing for legislation that can save lives. We need enthusiastic, educated, and trained individuals in all realms of our society, including home inspectors, to join with us and make a difference with radon reduction action.

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**About the Author**  
Gloria Linnertz is the founder of the Citizens for Radioactive Radon Reduction, a nonprofit organi­zation with a mission of radon reduction advocacy and education surrounding the dangerous effects of radon, in an effort to prevent radon-induced lung cancer. Linnertz can be reached at seascape@ htc.net. Visit [www.Citizens4RadonReduction.org](http://www.Citizens4RadonReduction.org) to learn more.

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