

16th November 2015



An Open Letter of Thanks

As the first UK Radon Awareness Week draws to a close, on behalf of the UK Radon Association I would like to thank all those who have supported the campaign to reduce avoidable lung cancers that occur from exposure to radon gas in our homes and workplaces.

- Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer (after smoking)
- Over 1100 people in the UK die each year from lung cancer as a result of exposure to radon
- More than 3 people will die in the UK today, and every day, from radon-induced lung cancer
- More than 3 people will die in the UK this week, and every week, from lung cancer caused by exposure to radon in the workplace

Information about the week is available at www.radonweek.co.uk where a video of one of our street events gauging awareness about radon can be seen. Our gratitude is due to all members of the public who took part in the street events with such enthusiasm, particularly the people of Bristol who took part in the video.

The Association is most grateful to the international bodies who gave us energetic support: The Canadian Association of Radon Scientists & Technologists (CARST), the European Radon Association (ERA) and the American Association of Radon Scientists & Technologists (AARST) whose President, Shawn Price, went far beyond the call of duty by flying to the UK to support our campaign in person.

We are grateful too to the World Health Organisation (WHO) for publicising our Week. Much appreciation is also due to the American Lung Association (ALA) and the British Columbian Lung Association, Canada who gave valuable advice and support. Thanks also to many individuals (including those whose lives have been touched by radon or lung cancer) who helped in as many ways as they could.

It behoves us to take account of the lessons we have learnt during the week and to act upon them. Surveys for the Week disclosed an overwhelming lack of public awareness about radon and the health risks associated with it. Although international lung and public health bodies are active in their own countries and willingly lent support to the promotion of awareness about radon, there was little evidence of it from UK health professionals.

Our Association came into being 2 years ago because we felt more should be done, among other key objectives, to ensure that the public were effectively informed. Lessons of the Radon Awareness Week serve to illustrate the magnitude of the challenge. Work to promote the health risks associated with radon exposure began in the UK in the late 1980s. Clearly efforts of the last 25 years+ have not succeeded and rather than carry on with a proven blueprint for failure, a fresh approach is essential. The UK Radon Association will lead that change.

It is also apparent that confusing, overly complex and – in some areas – outright erroneous or misleading advice has been given. As part of the Association's task, we will be challenging and correcting these as appropriate, in line with recognised international standards.

So along with our thanks, a plea: If you are a public health or lung health professional please get involved; if you are involved with radon in any way as part of your business please join us as members; if you have a non-commercial interest in radon please join us as associate members; if you are a building professional or member of the public please use us and our website. If you or a loved one have been affected by radon or radon-induced lung cancer, please let us know.

In the past 25 years more than 28000 people in the UK have died from radon induced lung cancer, with all the family sufferings and devastation that accompanied them. Most of these victims never knew about the dangers of radon or that a simple home test might have saved them.

Homes with high radon levels can be fixed.

We have been building more houses with high radon levels than we have been fixing, so the number of radon induced lung cancers is expected to rise, with further increases on top of that from energy-efficiency measures in our buildings that fail to take account of the increased radon accumulation that can result.

With all the pressures that burden the NHS, highlighted daily in the news, we call on the Government to address the radon problem properly and in so doing, to consult those with the requisite expertise to 'get it right'.

Fixing high radon levels
is not hard.
Having lung cancer is.



Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Martin Freeman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Martin Freeman
Chairman
UK Radon Association