

# The BC Inspector



## Does your client’s home have a radon problem?

Homeowners all want the cleanest, safest, most secure home environment to live in and raise their families. One way to do this is to monitor their homes for the quality of the air they breathe. Radon gas, for example, is not something that homeowners hear about every day; however it is the second leading cause of lung cancer after smoking.

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas formed when the uranium in soil and rocks breaks down. Outdoors, radon gas is very dilute and doesn’t pose a health risk. However, in the lower levels of a home or building, radon can accumulate to relatively high concentrations and become a health hazard. (Continued pg 2 – ‘Radon’)

## Six-storey wood frame buildings – Are they safe?

Many have expressed concern regarding the change to the [BC Building Code](#) now allowing up to 6 storey wood frame buildings. The Coquitlam Fire and Rescue Chief Tony Delmonico has [indicated](#) that “This change to the building code will most likely increase the potential of greater fire loss and possibly injury and deaths when fires occur in these structures. It also places a much greater demand on the city's resources and requirements for personnel and aerial devices.” John Grasty of Cash recently also [had this to say](#) about the compromised safety, this code change may represent. This change to the code has been made in most part to bail out the [troubled logging industry](#).

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*‘The BCIPI Inspector’ will now be known as ‘The BC Inspector’ as your editor prepares to broaden the readership.*

### Radon Continued – Does your client have a problem?

Exposure to radon has been linked to an increased risk of developing lung cancer. The concentration of radon, a homeowner's length of exposure, and their smoking habits all influence their level of risk. According to Health Canada, the combined effects of radon exposure and smoking create a risk that is greater than the two separately. In Canada, long-term exposure to radon causes around 2,000 deaths every year.

The Government of Canada's guideline for radon in indoor air is 200 Becquerels per cubic meter (Bq/m<sup>3</sup>). Corrective measures should be undertaken in a client's home whenever the average annual radon concentration is greater than 200 Bq/m<sup>3</sup> in an area occupied for more than four hours per day.

The amount of radon in a home will depend on many factors such as climate, geographic location, soil characteristics, type of construction, condition of the foundation, and type of ventilation systems used in the home. Radon can be an issue in all types of homes: new or old, with finished or unfinished basements, and regardless of whether they're heavily sealed or drafty. The gas can seep into a home through dirt floors, cracks in the foundation, sump pumps, floor joints, basement drains and gaps around pipes. While radon gas can be more common in some areas of Canada, any home can be at risk.

The only way to know the level of radon in a client's home is to test for the presence of the gas. Health Canada recommends that homes or buildings be tested for a minimum three-month period to better estimate the annual average radon level. Fortunately, there are several types of long-term radon test devices available in Canada, including the [Alpha Track](#) and the Electret. Currently, test devices are available at some home improvement retailers, or can be ordered from distributors by telephone or over the Internet.

A Canadian certification program for radon measurement and remediation is also currently being developed. In the meantime, building professionals who are interested in offering radon testing or mitigation services are encouraged to become certified through the National Environmental Health Association – National Radon Proficiency Program (NEHA-NRPP). For a list of North American training opportunities, please visit: [www.neha-nrpp.org/entry\\_level.shtml](http://www.neha-nrpp.org/entry_level.shtml) or [www.nrsb.org/nrsb-edu.htm](http://www.nrsb.org/nrsb-edu.htm).

For more information on radon testing and corrective measures, you can visit [Health Canada's website](#) where you can order the booklet: [Radon - A Guide for Canadian Homeowners](#), or download new testing guides for public buildings and residential dwellings. You can also phone Health Canada's general information line and select "radon" from the menu, at: 604-666-2083.

**Knowing the risks of radon and testing homes for radon, will go a long way towards ensuring the health and safety of your clients' homes.**

Submitted by Yota Hatziantoniou, MSc (Plan) - Sr. Risk Communication & Public Involvement Officer  
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#### 3<sup>rd</sup> Party CPD Seminars

[Construction Solutions Conference Nov/09](#)

[BOMA Online Seminars](#)

[BOMA Law & Risk Management Seminar](#)

[BCIT Part Time Studies](#)

[NACHI - Online Video Training](#)

#### Time Frame to Remediate a Home for Radon

Radon Concentration (Bq/m <sup>3</sup> )	Recommended Time Frame for Remediation
> 600	Less than 1 year
200-600	Less than 2 years
< 200	No action required



### ASK AN INSPECTOR - Inspector Question of the month

In each issue we will post one or more questions received from home inspectors and follow up the following issue with received answers.

This issue's question was submitted by yours truly – Your Editor and involves a question about a substance I have found in my bathroom lavatory. Facts:

- Used a rental power auger to clean out the drains in Jan/2006 (no previous problem in bathroom, was cleaning laundry drain and did whole house)
- One year later, bathtub and lavatory drain started draining slowly and a build up was visible in the lavatory drain (both lines go to same stack)
- Took lavatory drain apart and cleaned drain and lavatory out with high pressure water and also bleached to 'kill' organics (including lavatory overflow which was completely plugged). Used commercial product on bath drain. Situation on bath drain improved somewhat and lavatory now ran clear.
- Summer 2009 – bathtub and lavatory both drain quite slowly again. Even more residue (“growth”) appeared in lavatory drain.
- Tested material for moulds and all came back neg (Cladosporium, Penicillium, Aspergillus, Alternaria). Minor presence of sterile mycelia

Anyone have any ideas on what this stuff is? Please email editor@senwi.ca

### Ask an inspector – Follow Up

In the July issue, BCIPI member (John Maxon) asked about a grey-paint-on-coating discovered in the attic of a inspected home. Tips of BCIPI Board of Director and general member John Kostelnik, we contacted Foster Products and received back this response:

*Based on the description, question and pictures it could be one of our products. ... sounds like the roof was replaced ...It may have been leaking ... there is a chance that mould growth had occurred inside the attic. It appears to me that the framing was coated with an antimicrobial coating as part of a possible mould remediation. .. my guess, product could be Foster 40-20, 40-50 or 40-25*

## 3- The BCIPI Inspector



### |Industry News|

#### [BC Government cancels interest free loans for leaky condo owners.](#)

BC Government cancels a needed program that helps people keep their homes when there is nowhere else to turn. BC's Consumer Advocate – CASH [speaks out](#) on this decision that will put societies most vulnerable at risk.

#### [CasaGURU accepts BCIPI's Profile](#)

CasaGURU has recently accepted a submitted profile by BCIPI. BCIPI members may now setup business profile pages with CasaGURU free of charge.

#### [Simpson Strong-Tie Performs the world's largest earthquake shake table test](#)

#### [CSA Product Recall & Alerts](#)

All inspectors should make this CSA site a regular part of your weekly reading to keep abreast of products you may come across in your inspection travels.

## Picture(s) of the Month



**Left:** *"I finally fixed that leaking hot water tank. I even used Teflon tape for the threads. I should look at becoming a plumber, this is so easy"*

*Well Meaning - but very ignorant home owner  
([see this video](#) for what conditions this home owner has created by defeating the TPR valve.)*

**Below Right:** Some of your elected Board performing their domestic duties at a recent membership seminar meeting. Their wives would be proud of them but would ask *"Why don't they do that at home?"*



**Left:** Something wrong with this picture? Well, actually the picture is upside down. This flooring was found by BCIPI member - Ted Gilmour, on the ceiling of a room in a recently inspected dwelling. Wait till they start gluing the furniture to the ceiling in all the confusion!

## CPD Corner

This issue's CPD Corner is an eclectic compilation of links your editor has visited over the last few months.

[When is a vent not a vent?](#)

[People like to do business with people they like!](#)

[Un-vented Attic Issue?](#)

[Killer Pool Drains!](#)

[Practical Approaches to Residential Ventilation for Improved Durability and Indoor Air Quality](#)

[Information sheets on different dwelling components](#)

**Calling all expert witnesses:** Several BCIPI members provide expert witness services on a regular basis in cases against or in support of other home and property inspectors. In most cases, the judge's decisions are publicly posted and provide the rationale for making a decision one way or the other. These cases make excellent learning opportunities for a house or property inspector and your editor asks for copies of any decisions you come across to allow posting in this newsletter.

**Upcoming BCIPI Meetings:** (7:00 PM – 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday Monthly)

September 22 – Business Meeting: Organization ([Church](#))

October 27 – Ladder Safety Seminar ([Church](#))

November 21 (full day) – Christmas Gala ([Fort Langley](#))  
(Seminars TBA)

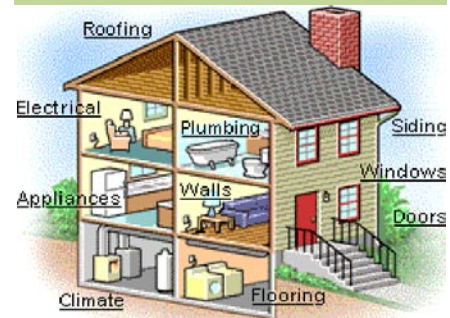
December – No Meeting

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**Notice:**

*The Views expressed herein are not necessarily the views of the BC Institute of Property Inspectors or the Applied Science Technologists & Technicians of British Columbia.*

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### Inspector Fun

#### [Having a really bad day?](#)

No matter how bad a day you have had, this guy has had a worse day!

#### [Home Inspection Nightmares III](#)

Photo's submitted by inspectors throughout the USA. Do you have something you think could beat these photos? Submit them today to [editor@senwi.ca](mailto:editor@senwi.ca).

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