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*Essex County
Cancer Coalition*

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PRESS RELEASE FOR ESSEX COUNTY RADON AWARENESS PROGRAM AND NEWBORN PILOT PROGRAM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ECCC INITIATES TWO RADON AWARENESS PROGRAMS WITH FREE TESTING KITS

Stanley H. Weiss, MD, FACP, the director of the **Essex County Cancer Coalition (ECCC)**, and Professor of Preventive Medicine and Community Health at UMDNJ-New Jersey Medical School, announced today that the Coalition is cooperating with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Radon Section in a “**Radon Awareness Program**” and a “**Newborn Pilot Program**” to promote testing for radon in homes.

According to Dr. Michael Festa, Health Officer of Essex County, the ECCC will work in collaboration with the county health office on the Radon Awareness Program to give radon testing kits to local health officers in Essex County, who in turn will distribute the kits to homeowners in their respective cities and towns.

Similarly, through the Newborn Pilot Program, families of infants born at various Essex County hospitals will receive radon testing kits to use in their homes.

In both programs, the kits are **free of cost** to homeowners, and participation in the program is voluntary. Information about radon in homes will be given to participants, whose contact information will be collected for possible follow-up.

Dr. Weiss said, “We are pleased to cooperate with the DEP in these programs to ensure that all residents are aware of the need to test homes and reduce radon levels where necessary. Testing is the only way to know if you and your family are at risk from radon, which can cause cancer. Radon testing is easy and problems can be mitigated.”

For communities participating in the Radon Awareness Program or the Newborn Pilot Program, the DEP Radon Section supports local outreach initiatives by providing radon informational materials including brochures, videotapes, posters, and giveaways.

Essex County Executive Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr. said, “We are pleased to be partnering with the Essex County Cancer Coalition and UMDNJ to raise awareness about the dangers of radon gas and its effects. These programs are a proactive measure that will allow families to conduct a simple at-home test to see if they are at risk. Finding out now is the best kind of prevention.”



Radon is a radioactive gas that occurs naturally when uranium breaks down in the soil and in rock formations. Small amounts of uranium are found in nearly all soils and rocks. Radon gas moves up through the soil and finds its way into homes through cracks in foundations and openings around sump pumps, pipes, and drains.

A high radon level is associated with an increased risk of lung cancer and is the leading cause of the disease in non-smokers. Approximately 21,000 deaths in the United States per year are attributed to radon exposure. Both the DEP and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recommend radon mitigation in homes with radon concentrations of 4 pCi/L (picocuries per liter) or more.

There is no truly “safe” level of radon since lung cancer can result from very low exposures to radon; however, the risk decreases with lower concentrations. So even people with test results below 4pCi/L may find it desirable to reduce their concentrations further. In about half of the homes in which radon levels have been mitigated in New Jersey, radon levels have been reduced to less than 1 pCi/L.

Dr. Weiss suggests that homeowners who tested in the past and found low levels of radon may wish to retest, because changes in a home such as additions or other renovations can change airflow within that structure. The air inside a home might also be affected by nearby construction, which can alter the local topography.

In addition to test kits provided by the ECCC through local health officers, the DEP’s Radon Section, at (800) 648-0394 or www.njradon.org, can provide a list of state-certified companies that provide testing services or do-it-yourself test kits, as well as companies that provide radon remediation services. The DEP’s Radon Section can also provide additional information on radon, as can ECCC at (973) 972-4623.

The ECCC is a diverse partnership of volunteers whose mission is to reduce the burden of cancer on residents of Essex County, New Jersey. Its goals are to increase cancer awareness and reduce the impact of cancer, promote awareness of and participation in cancer clinical trials, increase communication and collaboration among all stakeholders, and examine and prioritize an expansion of cancer control efforts throughout the county.

The Essex County Cancer Coalition (ECCC) is made possible by a grant from the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services’ Office of Cancer Control and Prevention. The mission of the ECCC is to implement the New Jersey Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan in Essex County. For more information on Comprehensive Cancer Control in NJ, please visit: www.njcancer.gov.

The ECCC is also supported by in-kind contributions from UMDNJ and other organizations. The ECCC website is www.umdj.edu/EssCaWeb. The coordinators of the ECCC are Christopher Tuohy, MPH and Daniel M. Rosenblum, PhD. The ECCC can be reached at 973-972-4623