EPA REGION 6 – SOUTH CENTRAL

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Dallas, Texas 75270

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HEALTHY SCHOOLS

Serving Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Texas, and 66 Tribes

OCTOBER IS CHILDREN'S HEALTH MONTH!

Children are often more vulnerable to pollutants than adults due to differences in behavior and biology, and these differences can lead to greater exposure and/or unique windows of susceptibility.

Children in overburdened and highly-exposed communities may suffer from a reduced ability to recover from harmful environmental exposures, due to lowered resilience. This can particularly affect children in low-income communities, as well as children in communities underserved by education, healthcare, and housing.

The focus of Children's Health Month 2023 is to raise awareness about the importance of protecting children, especially those in ultra vulnerable populations, from environmental threats where they live, learn and play. Find messaging about each week's focus area.

- October 1-7: Protecting children where they live.
- October 8-14: Protecting children where they learn.
- October 15-21: Protecting children where they play.
- October 22-28: International and National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week.

In addition to making sure schools and classrooms are safe using the tips above for parents, EPA has a range of resources specifically for schools and childcare providers.

- Healthy School Environments
- Healthy Schools Checklist

Spread the word: Use the children's health outreach toolkit access children's health publications, graphics, social media messaging and more.

Children's Environmental Health Facts

- Asthma
- Lead Exposure
- Childhood Cancer
- Developmental Disabilities

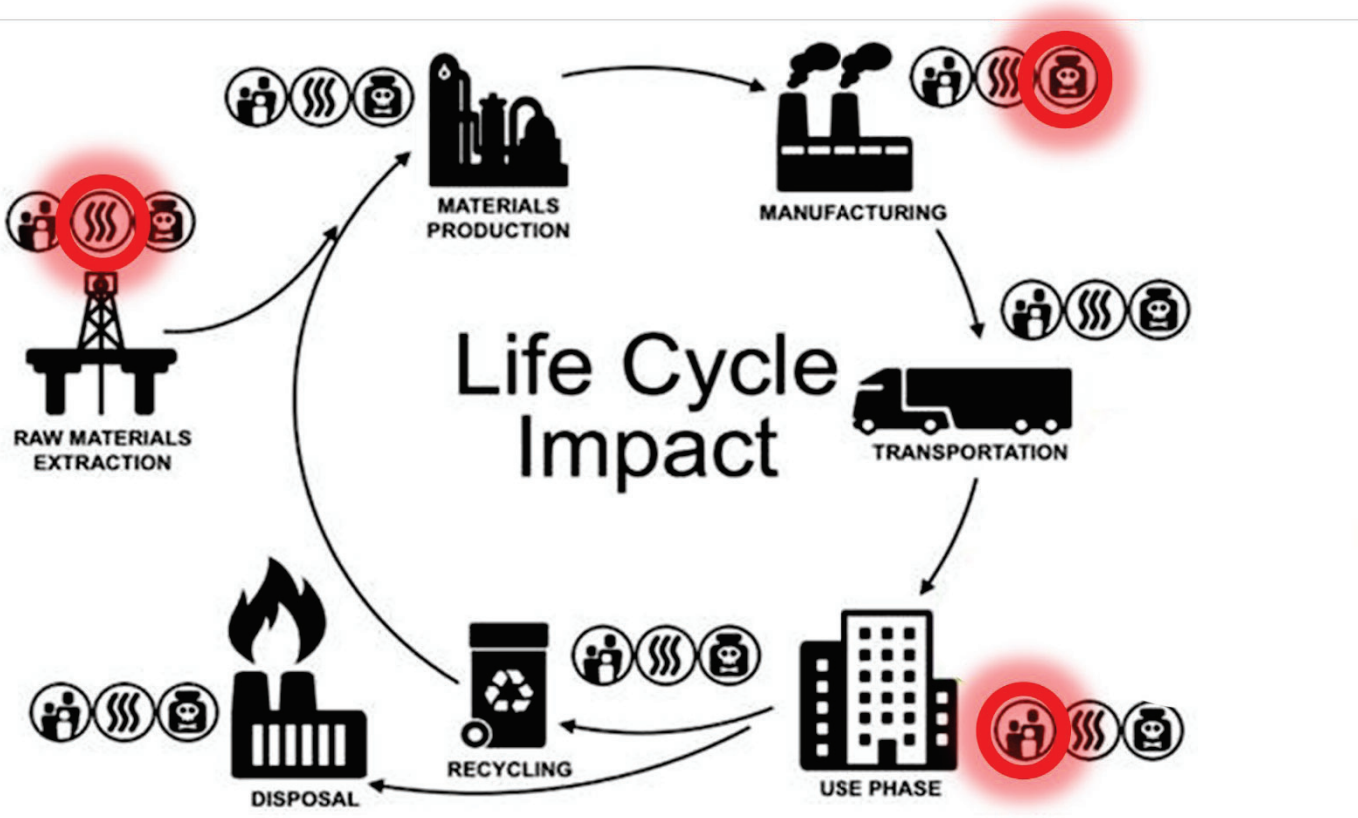
POLLUTION PREVENTION WEEK IS SEPTEMBER 18-24, 2023!

By purchasing greener products and services, you will be joining institutional purchasers from across the globe - from schools and universities, to hospitals, to local businesses and more - that are helping improve human health and the environment and catalyzing more socially just communities. By leveraging your buying power, you will help stimulate market demand for and increase availability of greener products and services for all purchasers.

In addition to these considerations, question whether your institution could reduce its environmental impact by reducing and/or reusing products. This could not only benefit the environment by saving energy, reducing waste, and preventing pollution, but it could also save your institution money. Visit the reducing and reusing basics webpage for more information.

EPA has developed ecolabels that can help purchasers identify greener products and services. In addition, EPA manages the Recommendations of Specifications, Standards, and Ecolabels which includes over 40 private sector standards/ecolabels/certifications across 30 purchase categories. Below is a sample of ecolabels that address energy efficiency, water efficiency, fleet management, refrigerant emissions, and green power. Click on each ecolabel to find out more about the individual programs or read our introduction to ecolabels and standards.

Example “hotspots” outlined in red.



Reduce, Recycle, and Reuse for Schools

Students, parents, and teachers can all make a difference in reducing waste at school. By practicing the "3 R's" of waste reduction—reduce, reuse, and recycle—we can all do our part. Think green before you shop. Before starting the new school year, look through last year’s materials. Many items can be reused or recycled. Purchase and use school supplies made from recycled products, such as pencils made from old blue jeans and binders made from old shipping boxes. Keep waste out of landfills by using school supplies wrapped in minimal packaging and buying in bulk when possible. Save packaging, colored paper, egg cartons and other items for arts and crafts projects. Look for other ways that you can reduce the amount of packing that you throw away. Maintain new school supplies. Keep track of pens and pencils. Try to put your things in a safe place every day. This will not only reduce waste but save you money in the long run.

NATIONAL LEAD POISONING PREVENTION WEEK IS OCTOBER 22-28, 2023!

Each year, National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week (NLPPW) is a call to bring together individuals, organizations, industry, and tribal, state and local governments to reduce childhood exposure to lead by increasing lead poisoning prevention awareness. October is also Children's Health Month, a time to raise awareness about children's environmental health, including the dangers and potential health impacts of lead.

NLPPW highlights the many ways parents, caregivers and communities can reduce children's exposure to lead and prevent its harmful health effects. EPA partners with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to raise awareness about lead exposure and lead poisoning by providing resources for the public to use to encourage preventive actions during NLPPW and beyond.

On November 1 and 2, 2023, EPA and the HUD will hold a virtual public workshop to receive stakeholder input on the detection, measurement, and characterization of lead-based paint to support efforts to reduce lead exposure. The workshop will cover topics related to low levels of lead in existing paint, including the potential health effects, relationship between lead-based paint and dust-lead hazards, possible exposure pathways, and emerging detection and measurement technologies.

EPA and HUD also seek any available new information on lead-based paint characteristics and medical evidence related to low levels of lead in paint to assist the agencies in a reevaluation of the definition of lead-based paint. Register to attend at https://www.epa.gov/lead/2023-lead-based-paint-technical-workshop

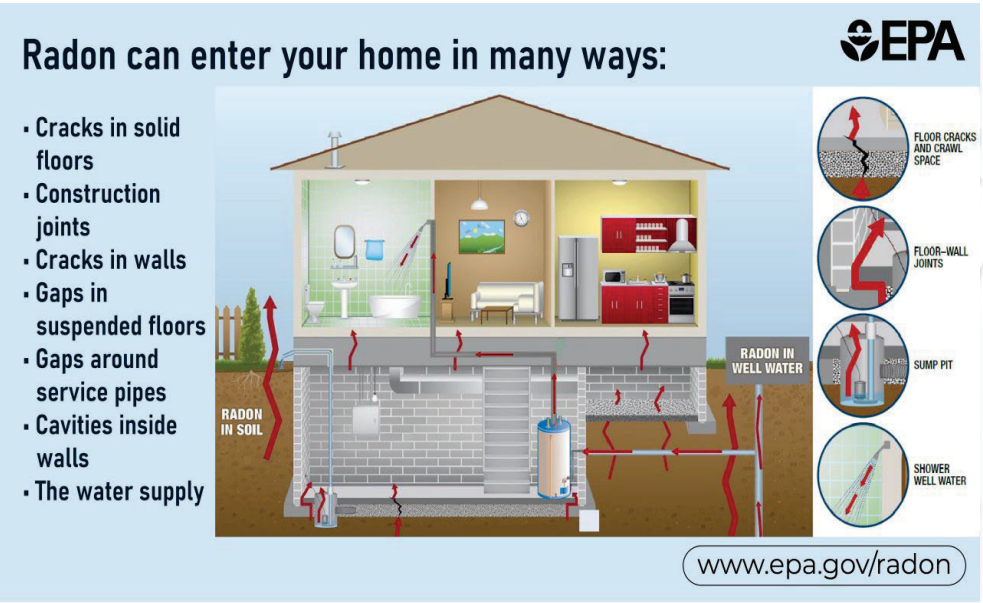
PREVENT LUNG CANCER: TEST YOUR HOME FOR RADON

EPA's radon program began more than 30 years ago as the scientific and public health community began to understand the risks associated with indoor radon exposure. Since then, elevated radon levels have been fixed in approximately two million homes in the United States and millions more have been tested. In many states, radon testing has become a standard part of real estate transactions. However, EPA estimates that about seven million high-radon homes remain across the United States.

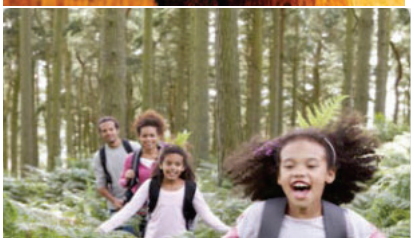
Testing is the only way to know if a home has an elevated level of radon. Affordable do-it-yourself radon test kits are available online and at most home improvement and hardware stores. You can also hire a qualified radon professional to test your home. EPA and the U.S. Surgeon General recommend taking action to fix your home if the radon level is 4 picocuries per liter (pCi/L) of air or more.

Taking action to reduce your exposure to radon is a long-term investment in your families' health and your home. The cost of reducing radon in your home depends on how your home was built and the extent of the radon problem. Most homes, however, can be fixed for about the same cost as other common home repairs.

For more information on testing and contact information for radon resources in your state, please see: https://www.epa.gov/radon/find-information-about-local-radon-zones-and-state-contact-information



WHAT IS ONE HEALTH?



One Health is a collaborative, multisectoral, and transdisciplinary approach—working at the local, regional, national, and global levels—with the goal of achieving optimal health outcomes recognizing the interconnection between people, animals, plants, and their shared environment. The One Health approach is a holistic approach to advance human well-being that recognizes that the health of people is closely connected to the health of animals and our shared environment: when we protect one, we protect all.

People, animals, and environments are interconnected so when you improve the health of one, you improve the health of the others. Humans interact with animals and plants through agriculture and food, outdoor recreation, and shared environments. Because people, animals, and plants share environments, they are all exposed to the same environmental factors.

One Health is a holistic approach that allows us to see the full picture and protect all pillars. For more information: https://www.epa.gov/one-health

EPA has long recognized the intricate, crucial, and interdependent links between people, animals, and their shared environments. Our researchers are working to develop ways to embrace the One Health approach as we work to safeguard the environment and protect public health. We are working with partners in the states, tribes, local communities, and public health organizations to use the One Health approach as a guide to meeting our shared missions.

OZONE: GOOD UP HIGH, BAD NEARBY

Ozone occurs both in the upper atmosphere and at ground level. In the stratosphere, ozone occurs naturally and helps protect us from the sun's harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays. This beneficial ozone has been partially destroyed by manmade chemicals, causing what is sometimes called a "hole in the ozone layer." However, with continued reductions in emissions, the ozone layer is expected to be completely recovered by the middle of the 21st century.

At ground level, the very same molecule is a harmful air pollutant, especially on hot sunny days when ozone can reach unhealthy levels. Those most at risk include children, older adults, and people with asthma or who are active outdoors, especially outdoor workers.

Depending on the level of exposure, health effects from ozone can:

- Cause coughing and sore/scratchy throat.
- Make it more difficult to breathe deeply.
- Inflame and damage the airways.
- Aggravate lung diseases such as asthma, emphysema, and chronic bronchitis.

What can you do when ozone levels are higher? Take it easier when working or playing outside, take more breaks, and schedule outdoor activities in the morning when ozone levels are lower. Of course, all this information takes us back to why we use the Flag Program. Check your Air Quality Index forecasts and display your flags daily to help protect your community when the air quality is poor!

EPA Region 6 - South Central

1201 Elm Street, Suite 500

Dallas, Texas 75270

EPA Region 6 Children's Health Team

Virginia Vietti

Children's Environmental Health Coordinator

Vietti.virginia@epa.gov

214 665-7431

Cathy Gilmore

SEE for Healthy Schools Newsletter

Gilmore.cathy@epa.gov

214 665-6574

Protecting human health and the environment.

EPA United States Environmental Protection Agency

STAFF CONTACTS

Sustainable Management of Food: Stephen Sturdivant, sturdivant.stephen@epa.gov , 214-665-6673

Sustainable Materials Management: Deanna Debose, debose.deanna@epa.gov, 214 665-6461

Safer Choice and Pollution Prevention.: Melanie Lillard, lillard.melanie@epa.gov, 214 665-7588

Lead Based Paint: Mikeal Adams, adams.mikeal@epa.gov, 214 665-6711

Integrated Pest Management: Charles Hooper, hooper.charles@epa.gov, 214 665-7349

Pollution Prevention and Source Reduction Assistance Grant Programs: Stephanie Cheaney, Cheaney.stephanie@epa.gov, 214 665-8057

Radon, Asbestos, and Indoor Air Quality: George Brozowski, brozowski.george@epa.gov, 214 665-8541

Ground Water: Scott Ellinger, ellinger.scott@epa.gov, 214 665-8408

Drinking Water: Angela Restivo, restivo.angela@epa.gov, 214 665-7123

Trash Free Waters: Rachel Renz, renz.rachel@epa.gov, 214 665-3129

PCBs: Harry Shah, shah.harry@epa.gov, 214 665-6457

WaterSense: Adam Weece, weece.adam@epa.gov, 214 665-2264

Environmental Education: Alexandra Olson, Olson.alexandra@epa.gov, 214 665-8506

Sustainable Materials Management and Disposal of Batteries; Jessica Miller, miller.jessica@epa.gov, 214 665-6563

Reuse and Recycling: Sydney Knodl, knodl.sydney@epa.gov, 214 665-6536

ODDS AND ENDS

Upcoming Newsletter

Contact

Feedback

Disclaimer

SmartWay

In our next issue, the December 2023 Region 6 Healthy Schools Newsletter will highlight the following:

- January is Radon Month
- February is National Pesticide Education Month
- March has National Groundwater Awareness Week and Fix a Leak Week

Healthy Schools is published by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 6 - South Central in Dallas, Texas. Region 6 includes the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas as well as 66 Tribes. For general information about Healthy Schools, to provide feedback on this newsletter, or to be added or removed from the distribution list, please contact Cathy Gilmore, Senior Environmental Employee (SEE) for Healthy Schools at Gilmore.cathy@epa.gov.

We would love your feedback on this newsletter or suggestions for future topics. Please email EPA at Gilmore.cathy@epa.gov.

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