



The Ecology Action Center News

Fall 2009

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9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Monday—Friday

What You Don't Know Can Hurt You: Radon Awareness

By: Kristen Urchell

As recently as June 2009, the Environmental Protection Agency published a nationwide map of potential concentrations of elevated radon levels. According to this map, the majority of Illinois, including homes in McLean County, lies in Zone 1, the highest potential zone for radon problems. Elevated radon in the home is the second leading cause of lung cancer and nearly 20,000 deaths a year. For this reason, the EAC has partnered with the McLean County's Radon Awareness program to promote awareness and testing of radon in the community.

"Radon is a radioactive, colorless, tasteless, and odorless gas derived from the radioactive decay of uranium in the soil" (radonmclean.org). The gas

moves upwards through air in the soil and can eventually makes its way into people's homes. Radon can enter the home in a plethora of ways: cracks in solid floors, gaps in suspended floors,

cracks in walls, cavities inside walls, construction joints, gaps around service pipes, and even through the water supply. Once inside the home, radon gets trapped and accumulates affecting the house's residents when they breathe it in. Reportedly, nearly one out of every fifteen homes in the U.S. has elevated radon levels.

The fact that radon is virtually undetectable by ordinary observations and gives no warning signs leaves many families unknowingly vulnerable to its effects. However, there is an inexpensive and simple test that can be done. There are two basic types of radon tests. To determine the year-round average for a home's radon levels, a long term (usually over ninety days) should be used. For quick and current results, a short-term test kit can be used and last from two to ninety days. A short term test is now sold at the EAC for a \$10 which covers the test and processing fees. Once the test is purchased the easy to follow instructions inform homeowners what action is required.

According to the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) the measurement of radon is done in picocuries per liter of air (pCi/L). If the test's result is 4 pCi/L or below no further action is necessary; nevertheless, the home should be retested within two years. A result between 4 and 8 pCi/L should be followed up immediately with another short-term test. If the average of the two tests is above the 4 pCi/L mark the IEMA suggests mitigation. Test result of 8pCi/L or greater are dangerous levels and further action and mitigation is highly recommended.

For more information on Radon, please visit the following websites: Radonmclean.org or www.radon.illinois.gov. For an economical test kit, stop by the Ecology Action Center or download the kit order form from our website.





Fall at the EAC

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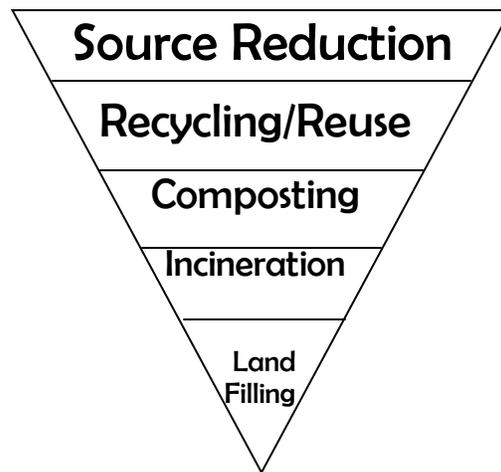
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Hierarchy in Solid Waste Reduction

By: DeAnna Belz, Assistant Director

Each year, Americans generate millions of tons of trash. What's in this trash and how can we best dispose of it? Currently, over 40% is paper, while metals, glass and plastic make up an additional 23.5%. That means if we recycled all possible materials, we could reduce our garbage by more than 60%! Another 25% of this trash is yard trimmings and food scraps. Add efficient composting to our system and we could reduce the waste going into landfills to less than 15%.



So what is the best way to accomplish this waste reduction? The inverted pyramid illustrated here shows the hierarchy of solid waste management. With the preferred method located at the top of the pyramid and working its way down to the inevitable land-filling. To accomplish a significant amount of reduction some major habit changes may be necessary. While this may at times seem difficult, the results are often well worth the effort.

To begin at the top, source reduction can be accomplished through a number of simple, everyday steps. First, shop for items with less packaging and take your own reusable bags to the store to further reduce waste. Less demand for bags could reduce the store's

desire to purchase them. Also, when you're packing lunches for school and work days use reusable containers and lunchboxes. An additional benefit to this is saving money.

Moving down the pyramid shows to recycle and reduce. Consider reusable products such as water bottles and coffee mugs. Avoid paper plates and other disposable utensils. Cloth napkins, sponges and dishcloths work as well as, if not better than, single-use housecleaning items and reduce waste. Unwanted yet durable goods should be donated or put on websites such as Freecycle™. A range of items, from furniture to appliances to outgrown clothing could make many families happy, as well as saving them money. Also, rent or borrow items that are used infrequently. For example, check your local library for the book or magazine you want to read or try swapping with a friend.

Lastly, backyard composting can significantly reduce the amount of waste put in the landfill. While most people recognize items that are biodegradable, many do not realize that these same items entombed in a landfill will not breakdown. However, when properly composted instead, this waste can be turned into natural soil additives on lawns and gardens, and used as potting soil for houseplants. The Ecology Action Center will be hosting a series of Build-Your-Own backyard composter workshops. A detailed composting brochure is also available on our website.

While we may never be able to eliminate waste entirely we certainly can reduce the volume of materials being landfilled. For more tips on reducing waste, check out The Consumer's Handbook for Reducing Solid Waste from the EPA at <http://www.epa.gov/waste/wycd/catbook/index.htm>.



Fall at the EAC

Save Some Green by Eating Green

By: DeAnna Belz, Assistant Director

Times may be tough, but during this economic downturn we can \$ave some green by serving more greens, technically speaking that is. Eating lower on the food chain, as in a plant based diet, will not only save you money, but can improve your health and the health of our environment.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, animal waste from industrial farming is one of the leading causes of pollution in American waterways. Veg-Fam, a British world hunger group, has determined a 10-acre farm could support sixty people if they grew soybeans; twenty-four people if they grew wheat; ten growing corn—and only two if they used the land to raise cattle. Therefore, growing plants is a more efficient use of resources.

One way to serve this 'green' nutrition is the use of beans. Beans may be one of the most under-appreciated food sources in America. They are loaded with cholesterol lowering fiber, and when combined with rice, can provide all the essential amino acids of protein needed to build healthy bones, muscles, blood, skin and other biological tissues. In essence, rice and beans (or any combination of whole grains and legumes) give us the same protein value as meat at a fraction of the cost. In addition, the USDA cites beans as one of the foods highest in cancer fighting anti-oxidants.

So, how do we make these beans and rice tasty? The beauty is that you can create unique flavor combinations simply by combining different varieties of rice with your choice of bean. Basmati rice, jasmine rice, brown rice, wild rice, and white rice can be mix-and-matched with a wide variety of beans, from black-eyed beans to pinto beans. The combinations are endless.

To start, rice can be prepared in large batches and is one of the easiest foods to freeze. You may want to consider investing in a rice cooker (mine came from Freecycle™.) While dry beans are much cheaper (and can easily be prepared in either a slow-cooker or pressure cooker), canned beans are quicker and allow for more variety.

Remember, variety is the spice of life, so keep a variety of spices on hand and you'll never run out of ideas. To get you started:

Caribbean Red Beans & Rice

1 onion (diced)
3 cloves garlic
1 T. olive oil
½ tsp. ground nutmeg
½ tsp. cloves
1 can (14.5 oz) red beans (drained and rinsed)
1 can (14.5 oz) diced tomatoes with liquid
2 C. cooked rice

Sautee onion and garlic in olive oil until onions turn soft, about 3 to 5 minutes. Add spices and cook for just one more minute. Add the beans and the tomatoes. Cover and cook for about 30-35 minutes, or until a thick sauce consistency is achieved. Stir in the rice and heat through. Add salt and pepper to taste.



Recycling Then and Now

Evolution of Recycling

By: Michele Bell, Environmental Educator

Operation Recycle started during the summer of 1970 as the first recycling program in Mclean County. The Ecology Action Center education component was developed in 1992 when the municipalities took on the recycling responsibilities.

1. In the beginning the **ONLY** items to be recycled were:
 - A. newspaper bound by string into 1 ft-high bundles
 - B. office paper (white only, no slick paper)
 - C. glass bottles with no labels pre-sorted by color (clear, green, brown)
 - D. cardboard (cut into very small pieces)
 - E. wide mouthed plastic bottles (NO lids)
 - F. flattened bi-metal cans
 - G. flattened aluminum cans only



2. Now in Bloomington-Normal residents are able to recycle:
 - A. junk mail
 - B. magazines (slick paper)
 - C. all types and colors of paper, cardstock, construction paper, etc.
 - D. aluminum cans and aluminum foil
 - E. cardboard (all sizes)
 - F. newspapers (all types)
 - G. bi-metal cans
 - H. kitty litter plastic containers
 - I. glass bottles and their lids
 - J. Many plastic containers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and, 7 such as bottles, yogurt, butter tubs, cottage cheese, sour cream, clam shells, etc.

Thirty-eight years ago recycling took a lot of effort with removing labels and lids, separating all materials by colors, and flattening aluminum and bi-metal cans. Now in 2009 recycling is much easier. We are able to combine all containers (plastic, bi-metal, glass and aluminum) with their lids in one place. The paper sorting and separating is gone. Mixed newspapers, magazines, homework, office paper, construction papers, and card stock can be dropped in together. Additional plastics are able to be recycled in our system such as yogurt containers, butter tubs, cottage cheese, and sour cream containers.

Because of the ease of recycling, our recycling rate climbed to 37.6% in 2008. Imagine with a little more involvement and effort we could accomplish the 40% recycling rate that is our county goal. This is attainable with your help! For more information on recycling centers in the area call the Ecology Action Center refer to our website.

Current Recycling Drop-Offs

Recycling drop-offs in the area allow for more residents to drop-off more recyclables. For traditional recyclables (food containers, paper, cardboard, etc.) in the Bloomington-Normal area alone there are over fourteen locations. Locations such as Jewel-Osco, Kroger Landmark Plaza, and University Plaza in Normal; Wal-Mart and the Shirk Center Lot at Illinois Wesleyan University in Bloomington; or multiple schools in the area including: Kingsley Junior High, Prairieland Elementary, and Normal West High School. (Continued on Page 5.)

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Current Recycling Drop-Offs (cont.)

In addition to traditional recyclables McLean County has multiple drop-off locations for hard-to-handle/non-traditional recyclables which include:

Electronics

Electronics from residents are accepted at the Normal Public Works Garage (located at 1301 Warriner St.); businesses may recycle electronics through Advanced Technology Recycling in Pontiac

Compact Fluorescent Lamps (CFLs)

CFLs can be recycled at Town of Normal Facilities Management Parking Lot located at 207 S. Linden, City of Bloomington Public Service – Drop Off Facility at Jackson Street and East Street, Springfield Electric 902 Four Seasons Road in Bloomington, or the Ecology Action Center.

Plastic Garden Pots

Plastic Garden Pots, after cleaned of dirt and wire, can be recycled at AB Hatchery & Garden Center, C Wendell Niepagen Greenhouses, or Green View Nursery

Household Batteries

Rechargeable and nonrechargeable batteries can be recycled at Batteries Plus and Interstate Batteries Center

Automotive Products

Antifreeze, Motor Oil, and Transmission fluid is taken at Lube Pros Jiffy Lube, and Speed Lubes located in Bloomington

Tires can be recycled at most tire retailers

Old car batteries can be dropped-off at Interstate Batteries and Sears Automotive in Bloomington and Team Automotive in Normal

Outdated or Unused Pharmaceutical disposal

Eastland Pharmacy in OSF Eastland Medical Plaza, Atrium Pharmacy, BroMenn Regional Medical Center, Merle Pharmacy, Ryan Pharmacy, Chenoa Pharmacy (Chenoa) or Doc's Drugs (LeRoy). Controlled substances can be disposed at Bloomington Police Department, Normal Police Department, or Illinois State University Student Services.



NEW "Green Drinks" Discussion Group

What mixes better than a spirited discussion and spirits (or for that matter, ales, ciders, or lattes)? Well, maybe Newman-O's and Kilgus Dairy milk, but not much else! So, the EAC has decided to create a "Green Drinks" discussion group every first Tuesday at The Medici in Normal. Here we'll gather local green supporters of all sorts—whether you are independent, progressive, leftie, green elephant, or tree-hugger—for great conversation on green topics. EAC will provide the conversation starter by suggesting an article (downloadable from our website or Facebook page) then we'll all meet up for an open discussion and general good time. No need to sign up, just show up, get yourself a beverage whether it be espresso, or an espresso stout, and join us for our inaugural conversation the first Tuesday of October (Oct. 6) at 7 pm! Hope to see you there!

Recycle the Ecology Action Center Newsletter by passing it on to someone else after you have read it.



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Calendar of Upcoming Events

Sept 19, 9AM–1PM, Freecycle Free-4-All. At Anderson Park in Normal. All are welcome to share lightly used items and take what is offered. For more information call the EAC at 309-454-3169.

Sept 26, 10AM-Noon, Sugar Creek Clean-Up. Call 309-454-3169 to volunteer.

Sept 28, 5:30PM, Build-Your-Own Composter Workshop. Download registration form from www.ecologyactioncenter.org or stop by the EAC. Registration deadline Sept 27.

Sept 30, 5:30PM, Build-Your-Own Composter Workshop. Download registration form from www.ecologyactioncenter.org or stop by the EAC. Registration deadline Sept 27.

Oct 6, 7PM, Green Drinks Discussion Group. At Medici in Normal. Please read article on page 5 for more information.

Nov 6, 9AM-1:30PM, Growing the Greenways Plan and Trail Conference. Located at the Davis Lodge at Lake Bloomington. For more information and registration information contact Mercy Davison at (309) 454-9590 or mdavison@normal.org

Nov 14, America Recycles Day at Children's Discovery Museum

Watch the events calendar at www.ecologyactioncenter.org for dates and more information.