



By Appointment
To Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II
Damp Proofing and Timber Treatment Specialists
ProTen Services Ltd., Bath

WHO places radon responsibility firmly on professionals

In its recently published Handbook on Indoor Radon, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has categorically stated that the responsibility for risks associated with radon gas is placed in the hands of designers, specifiers, contractors and other property professionals.

Since 2005, the World Health Organisation has been running the International Radon Project (IRP), an initiative aimed at reducing the worldwide risk of lung cancer associated with exposure to radon gas. In the UK, some 2000 people die every year from lung cancer linked to radon exposure.

A key product of the IRP has been the creation of the Handbook on Indoor Radon: A Public Health Perspective, published last week.

In addition to updated information on the health implications of radon exposure, testing protocols and risk communication, the Handbook contains a chapter on radon protection methods for new constructions and radon mitigation in existing buildings.

The Handbook stresses that high indoor radon levels are not naturally occurring, rather the “result of the human activities of designing and constructing houses as well as the living habits of house occupants.”

Prof. William Angell, Chair of the WHO IRP Prevention and Mitigation Working Group highlights that, “Indoor radon levels are caused by the way homes are designed and built. They are not naturally occurring.”

WHO have specifically stated that they “clearly place responsibility for radon risks on architects, builders, real estate professionals and home sellers”.

The implications of this declaration are far-reaching, and impose a duty on all those involved in the construction and selling process to ensure adequate steps are taken to construct buildings that are properly protected from radon gas. This includes everyone from the designers and specifiers, contractors on-site and building control officers, right through to the agent selling the property. In the case of leased buildings, the landlord also has a responsibility to ensure his property does not endanger the health of his tenants.

Research carried out in the UK indicates an unacceptably high failure rate in existing radon protection measures. This is likely to be due to a combination of factors, including the use of inappropriate techniques, materials and non-specialist labour.

The WHO Handbook emphasises the need for trained specialists to be used for radon protection and mitigation work.

ProTen Services’ surveyors and technicians involved in the field of radon have attended formal training courses, passed examinations and have a wealth of practical on-site experience, and the Company is a founder member of The Radon Council.