



TOWN OF TRURO

BOARD OF HEALTH

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TO: All Interested Parties

FROM: Truro Board of Health

RE: **Local Board of Health Regulation Requirements for Real Estate Transfer**

DATE: October 1, 2015

This letter serves as a reminder of the requirements for transfer of property in Truro in accordance with the Truro Board of Health Regulations:

1. **Existing Title 5 Septic Systems installed under the 1978 or 1995 Code (revised in 2006):** Sewage disposal system inspection by a licensed inspector approved by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP). Said inspection will be valid for two years. A copy of the system inspection report will be delivered to the Health Department for approval.
2. **Non-Conforming Septic Systems:** An upgrade of the system must occur prior to transfer of property. Non-conforming systems are any system when installed did not comply with the provisions of either the 1978 or 1995 iterations of Title 5, including cesspools and all other similar systems in use prior to the adoption of the 1978 Code.
3. **Testing of the well:** Water quality analysis VOC (Volatile Organic Chemicals) and Routine water quality analysis must be performed. The analysis must be conducted by a certified MassDEP laboratory and meet acceptable drinking water standards. The test analysis for both routine and VOC are valid for one year.
4. **Above Ground Tanks** (fuel oil) shall be required to provide 110% containment capacity or replaced with Double walled fuel storage tanks. The fuel oil storage tank or containment device must be approved by the Fire Department before installation occurs. Copper fuel lines of all fuel oil storage tanks, both above ground and underground, shall be encased in 20 gauge POLYVINYLCHLORIDE piping.
5. **RADON TESTING IS RECOMMENDED – see public health fact sheet**

Any property transfer will require this compliance be it transferred by sale, exchange, gift, inheritance or bequest to a new ownership. It will not be required for conveyance or devise of property to a surviving spouse.

Public Health Fact Sheet on Radon

What is radon?

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas. It is produced in the ground through the normal decay of uranium and radium. As it decays, radon produces new radioactive elements called radon daughters or decay products. Radon and radon daughters cannot be detected by human senses because they are colorless, odorless, and tasteless.

Where does radon come from?

Radon originates in the ground and can be found in soil and rocks. As with any gas, radon diffuses as it flows along the path of least resistance to the surface of the ground before entering the atmosphere. Once it enters the atmosphere, radon becomes diluted in the outdoor air and concentrations are so low that it is of minor concern.

Since it is a gas, radon can also move into any air space, such as basements, crawl spaces, or caves. Once inside an enclosed space, such as a home, radon can accumulate. For this reason, indoor concentrations are usually higher than those found outdoors. Houses with little air exchange because of improvements to prevent heat loss will generally have higher indoor radon levels than draftier houses.

How does radon get into homes?

Radon moves through small spaces in the soil and rock on which a house is built and can seep into a home through dirt floors, floor drains, sump pits, joints, or tiny cracks and pores in hollow-blockwalls. As a result, radon concentrations tend to be greater in the lower levels of a home, such as the basement.

Radon can also dissolve in well water and contribute to airborne radon in homes when released through running water. Studies indicate that very few public groundwater supplies contain enough radon to be a significant source of radon in homes. There is very little radon in surface water supplies because the water is exposed to outdoor air, thus diluting the radon concentrations.

Is exposure to indoor radon harmful?

When radon undergoes radioactive breakdown, it decays into other radioactive elements called radon daughters. Radon daughters are solids, not gases, and stick to surfaces such as dust particles in the air. If contaminated dust is inhaled, these particles can adhere to the airways of the lung. As these radioactive dust particles break down further, they release small bursts of energy which can damage lung tissue and therefore increase the risk of developing lung cancer. In general, the risk increases as the level of radon and the length of exposure increases.

Radon itself, on the other hand, is almost chemically inactive and an inhaled radon atom is very likely to be exhaled before it decays. Thus, the main health risk from radon is exposure to its decay products.

What can be done to reduce exposure to indoor radon?

The federal government has studied the effectiveness of various ways to reduce high concentrations of radon in homes. The most obvious remedy is to increase ventilation of the home which allows the radon to escape. Another approach is to prevent radon from getting into the home, but determining how the gas enters a building poses a major difficulty. A booklet describing several methods to reduce high concentrations of radon can be obtained from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's Radiation Control Program.

High levels of radon are reduced through a mitigation system installed into the home. The most common type of system is called sub-slab depressurization. The EPA does not advocate the sealing of cracks in the basement floor as a single approach to solving a radon problem.

Although there are no Massachusetts state or federal regulations for naturally occurring radon or radon daughters, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has recommended guidelines for taking action. Concentrations of radon gas are measured as "picocuries per liter" (pCi/l). The EPA suggests that if an initial screening measurement results in a reading greater than 4 pCi/l, further measurements should be taken to determine the annual average exposure to radon and that action be taken within a reasonable period of time. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health's Radiation Control Program will assist you in obtaining further measurements.

How can I find out if my home has radon?

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Radiation Control Program in conjunction with the EPA did a study in 1988, and with the data obtained it is possible to estimate the potential of radon problems by county. The data shows that one out of four houses may have levels above the 4pCi/L action level however, the only way to know if your home has a radon problem is to do a radon test.

If you have further questions on radon, you may call Radiation Control Program and they will advise you on how to get your home tested and assist you in interpreting the results.

Where can I get further information?

Massachusetts Department of Public Health
Radiation Control Program
Schrafft Center, Suite 1M2A
529 Main Street, Charlestown, MA, 02129
(617) 242-3035 or RadiationControl@massmail.state.ma.us