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## **Widow Urges Public to Check Their Homes for Invisible Killer**

*American Lung Association of Oregon Offers Radon Test Kits*

The fourth holiday season has passed since Marlene MacEwan lost her husband, Bob, to lung cancer. Now, like the American Lung Association of Oregon, the Surgeon General and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, MacEwan is urging everyone who has not yet tested their home for radon to do so in January during National Radon Action Month.

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that concentrates in buildings. It emits from granite containing soils and rocks, is invisible, odorless and cannot be sensed. Radon is a common, yet not well known local problem. Nearly 50 percent of homes in some East Portland, Vancouver and West Salem neighborhoods have radon levels above the EPA action level. Although, high radon levels can occur anywhere and testing is the only way to detect it.

“Radon is easy to test for and most houses with high radon are easily fixed,” said Don Francis, general manager of EcoTech, the local company that installed a radon mitigation system in the MacEwans’ home. “Radon test kits are available for \$11 through the American Lung Association of Oregon. The cost to design and install a radon mitigation system averages under \$2,000.”

After being a non-smoker diagnosed with lung cancer, Bob MacEwan wanted to know the cause. He learned that, according to the EPA, radon is the leading cause of lung cancer in non-smokers and that radon causes more than 20,000 lung cancer deaths every year in the U.S. Despite being told by a government official that their Lake Oswego neighborhood did not have a radon problem, the MacEwans bought a test kit and learned that their home had a radon level of 56 pCi/L (pico curies per liter of air). The EPA recommends that a building with 4 pCi/L of radon or above be fixed.

“Radon took Bob, the love of my life, at age 49, which is way too early. I don’t want that to happen to anyone else,” said MacEwan, a Lake Oswego resident. “I can’t undo what happened to Bob, but by urging everyone to test their homes for radon I can save others from needless deaths.”

The MacEwans’ house was fixed and the post-mitigation radon level is 2 pCi/L. Lung cancer is the only know health problem caused by radon. For more information about radon, visit [www.lungoregon.org](http://www.lungoregon.org), [www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/rps/radon/radon.shtml](http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/rps/radon/radon.shtml) or [www.oregonradon.com](http://www.oregonradon.com).

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