

# Local radon levels may cause cancer

By RENEE BANERJEE-FLEMISH  
Collegian Science Writer

Although Centre County houses are not in the highest risk zones for contamination by cancer-causing radon gas, some area homes may have potentially hazardous levels, a University health physicist said.

Rodger Granlund said, "While the percentage of houses with high radon levels is relatively low in this area, there probably are houses that (warrant) corrective action."

Dan Egan, a member of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Division of Criteria and Standards, said radon gas is produced during the breakdown of naturally occurring uranium.

Egan said radon and a group of "radon daughters" — related breakdown products — have been linked to lung cancer in certain geographic regions.

"People who inhale the gas run an increased risk of lung cancer," he said, adding there is evidence that the problem is compounded in smokers.

In spacious areas, these gases disperse safely, he said. Radon and related gases pose a health threat only under closed conditions.

In Pennsylvania, naturally-deposited uranium is concentrated in a geographic formation known as the Reading Prong, Egan said.

Richard Guimond, director of the EPA's Division of Criteria and Standards said, "The region extends from Boyertown into Bethlehem, Easton, the southern part of Allentown and over into parts of New Jersey, Connecticut on into the New England area."

University professor of geology Robert Schmalz said, "Uranium has been found in high concentra-

tions in the Jim Thorpe region as well as in localized areas of the Reading Prong."

Uranium is usually found in two types of rock: igneous rock where it was trapped during formation, and sedimentary rocks, he said.

"Since the State College region lies primarily over limestone, uranium deposits would ordinarily not be considered a threat," Schmalz said. "However, it has been detected in association with the black shales (in the region) and other rocks having a high organic matter content."

Schmalz said groundwater carries the uranium and deposits it in rocks with high concentrations of organic matter.

Locally, radon levels have run from 1-2 picocuries per liter to 25-30 picocuries per liter, Schmalz said.

"Levels measured at higher than two are considered significant, so when we have values in the 25 to 30 region, we're talking about high concentrations," Schmalz said.

Unlike some other gases, radon easily seeps from the underlying rock into a house through the foundation, Egan said.

"Cracks and fissures in concrete will allow the gas to seep right through," Egan said.

Granlund said, "The harmful dose the lungs get actually comes from the (radon and related gases) attaching to tiny dust particles in the air."

However, simply filtering air may not solve the problem, he said.

"Such devices usually filter out the larger particles, while leaving the smaller, more dangerous (dust) particles behind," Granlund said, adding that smaller particles settle farther down in the lungs, posing a potentially greater hazard.

Home insulation also contributes to the problem, Egan said.

"In houses that lie over the areas of radon seepage, the lack of air exchange (due to tight insulation) drives the radon concentration up," he said.

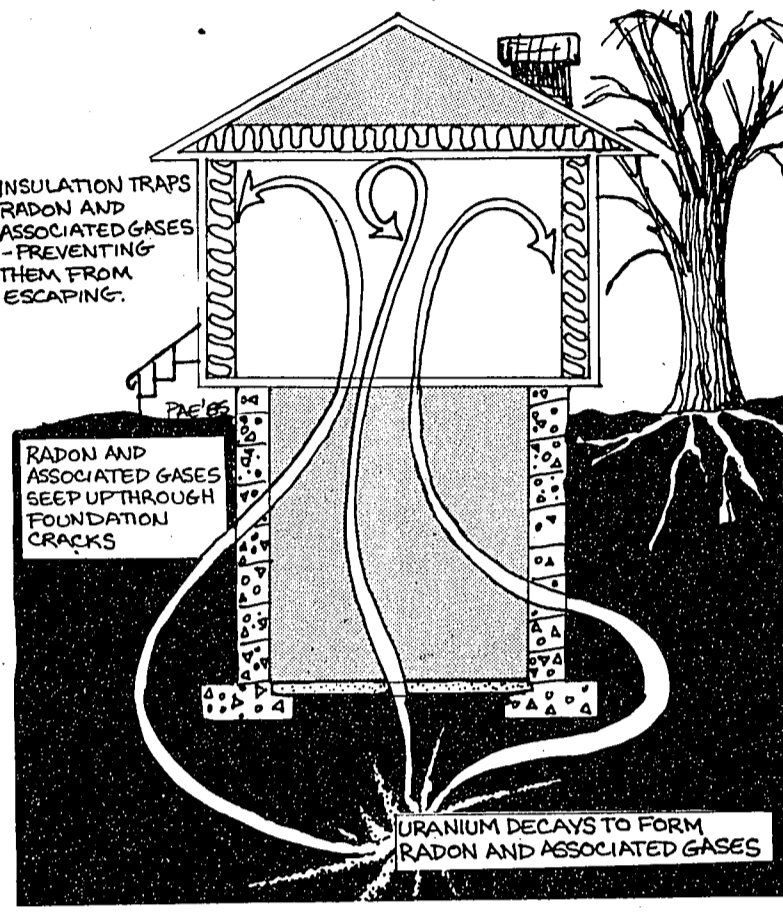
To monitor the problem, state-contracted "track-etch" detectors have been offered free of cost to residents in regions where radon levels pose a particular threat, Egan said.

"The track-etch detector is left in

the basement for a three-month period, after which it is sent back to the lab for analysis," Egan said.

Schmalz suggested residents purchase a detector, "if for no other reason than just reassurance."

However, Schmalz cautioned, "Whatever the results, people should temper their reaction and interpretation with the knowledge that radon levels will change. Therefore checks must be carried out in regular intervals over weeks or months."



# Students speak out against pornography

By W.T. HOLLAND  
Collegian Staff Writer

Student members of women's groups and Christian organizations came out in force last night to speak out against pornography — specifically the Undergraduate Student Government's business interest in the Penn State Movie Co-op.

The co-op expects another profitable year, mostly as a result of showing x-rated movies on campus.

A USG subcommittee sponsored the open forum and will later decide if USG should withdraw from the co-op.

USG currently holds a 40 percent interest in the movie co-op, while the Association of Residence Hall Students holds the remainder. The two organizations split profits and possess a proportionate amount of representation on the co-op board of directors.

USG Treasurer Andy Rusnak, a voting member on the co-op, said USG proposed to reduce its share of the co-op to 30 percent, while ARHS also negotiated a ten percent drop to 50 percent. The remainder of the profits would go to a capital fund to maintain equipment, said Jacqueline R. Moroco, also a USG representative to the co-op.

Rusnak emphasized that USG is only part of the co-op and that the movie revenues are not a major part of USG Business Department's overall revenue.

This summer, co-op director Regis Brown said of 32 movies shown during Spring semester, the 11 which were x-rated grossed \$14,316 — 59 percent of the co-op's total receipts.

Brown said last night that when he took over the co-op it was \$2,000 in debt and the best way to make a profit was to show pornography

films. He said USG has not regularly attended the co-op's board of directors meetings and has not been actively involved in setting policy.

"This gathering of people here is biased because you're not going to get people to come here and support pornography on TV... it's ridiculous," Brown said. "Why doesn't USG take a better approach and try to create some legislation within the co-op. Until that happens, you can have these meetings all the time."

Brown said students can not stop x-rated films from being shown on campus, citing a precedent in Michigan State, where that university lost a first-amendment suit.

Members of the audience opposed the presentation of pornographic films on campus for numerous reasons. One group issued Xerox copies of a New York Times article which linked violent pornography to aggression.

Esther Johnson (sophomore-premed) said that USG's final decision would be irrelevant to the problem and that by withdrawing they cannot "wash their hands clean."

"(Students) can complain all (they) want about these films, but it is time to do something about it," she said.

She later complimented USG for holding the student forum on the issue.

USG Town Senator Pat Lenz — the subcommittee chairman — said the subcommittee will consider input from the forum, a meeting with the co-op, and a meeting with USG's Business department before making a decision.

Lenz said he expects to formulate a progress report for tomorrow's USG senate meeting.

Students are encouraged to attend.

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