

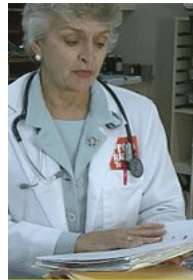
# When They Know, Radon Victims Have a Powerful Message

When Gloria Linnertz, Elizabeth Hoffman and Barbara Sorgatz share their personal experiences with radon-induced lung cancer, people listen. As soon as Liz Hoffman told her story on WCCO Television in Minneapolis, over 30,000 viewers called to order a radon test kit from the health department. Soon thereafter, the Minnesota legislature passed a law to require all new homes to be constructed with radon-resistant building features.

After Gloria Linnertz shared the loss of her husband Joe to every state senator and representative in Illinois, a bill to require all homebuyers to be warned about the danger of radon exposure was introduced to the Illinois legislature. Once Barbara Sorgatz teamed up with Gloria to make a public appeal for the bill's passage on Chicago's WGN Television, it helped convince the Illinois State House to pass the Illinois Radon Awareness Act. (To read their stories and more, go to the Cancer Survivors Against Radon website at [www.cansar.org](http://www.cansar.org) )



Liz Hoffman



Dr. Lane Price

Dr. Price readily acknowledges that many oncologists are so focused on lung cancer treatment they give little thought to a cause other than smoking. For most non-smoking victims, the likely explanation remains a mystery.

The day Dennie Edwards, a real estate agent from Elyria, Ohio was diagnosed with lung cancer in 2004, he could not believe it. A former Marine who always kept himself in prime physical condition, he went out of his way to avoid cigarette smoke. Although his doctor did not offer any explanations, as a Realtor, Dennie was aware that EPA recommends all homebuyers have a radon test performed prior to purchase.

*"Even though I've been a real estate agent for 31 years, I had never bothered to test my house for radon. I always informed my clients that radon testing prior to purchase was an **option** (to protect my liability), but truthfully, I really didn't care if they tested or not,"* said Dennie when interviewed for *Healthline*, a program hosted by Kevin Soden on *Retirement Living TV*.

*"Now I had to wonder whether my lung cancer was caused by radon exposure. While the doctor scheduled my surgery, I scheduled a radon test. The result was 10 pCi/L, two and a half times the EPA's recommended Action Level. I had lived in the home for 12 years. Needless to say, I called a contractor to have a mitigation system installed."*



Dennie Edwards

Before he passed away last June, Dennie took every opportunity his health would allow to speak out about the importance of radon testing.

But the voices are still too few. We must do a better job of informing patients that radon exposure could be the reason they have lung cancer. Once they realize a radon test of their home may identify the likely cause, they want to know. They want to protect their loved ones; they want to warn others.

To assist newly diagnosed lung cancer patients in determining if radon exposure played a likely role, the American Association of Radon Scientists and Technologists (AARST) has joined with CanSAR to sponsor a special program.

If you or a family member has recently been diagnosed with lung cancer, AARST will send you a free radon test kit. Go to [www.cansar.org](http://www.cansar.org) and click on *CanSAR Registry*. Fill out the form and submit. A free test kit will be mailed in 3-4 weeks.

If the test reveals an average radon concentration at or above EPA's 4.0 pCi/L Action Level, have it mitigated. Then contact CanSAR VP Gloria Linnertz at [seascape@htc.net](mailto:seascape@htc.net). Posting your story on the CanSAR website may be the first of many opportunities for you to convince others how important it is to reduce their radon exposure. Perhaps your appeal will inspire legislators in your state to pass a Radon Awareness Act.

*By Dallas Jones, Chairman of the American Radon Policy Coalition*



Joe Linnertz

Perhaps the most important lesson we can learn from the past twenty-two years of mostly futile efforts to convince the public and law makers to *actually do something* about deadly radon exposure is this: when government agencies provide radon-risk data, people yawn; when home inspectors recommend a radon test, they are met with skepticism; but when radon's victims and family members deliver the message, people are inspired to take preventative action.

So the solution sounds simple enough – rally radon victims to take to the streets, warn the populace and demand action from our policy makers.

Unfortunately, only a few of the 21,000 Americans who contract radon-induced lung cancer every year ever discover the likely cause. If they were smokers, they and their doctors reasonably assume the cause was cigarette smoking. Yet nearly one in six new lung cancer cases occur in patients who never smoked.

Dr. Lane Mathis Price, Director and Radiation Oncologist at Decatur General Oncology Center, is one of the few oncologists who insist on patients having their home tested for radon.

*"People come into my office and say Doc Price I just don't understand it. How can this happen to me? I don't smoke. Nobody ever smokes around me. How can I have lung cancer?"*

The U.S. EPA ranks radon as the leading cause of lung cancer in non-smokers. According to Dr. Price, if a lung cancer patient with no history of smoking determines she's been exposed to elevated radon in her home for a number of years, it is reasonable to conclude that radon was the likely cause.



Barb Sorgatz