

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Port Hope Area Initiative begins radon monitor pickups

Port Hope, Ont. (January 26, 2015) — The pickup of radon monitors that were placed last summer in close to 1,200 Port Hope homes and buildings begins Feb. 2.

Port Hope Area Initiative (PHAI) staff will be collecting the monitors over a three-week period as part of the PHAI Property Radiological Survey that will test all 4,800 private and public properties in Ward 1 and a few properties in Ward 2 for the presence of historic low-level radioactive waste.

Property owners were sent a notification card in the mail letting them know when the PHAI survey team will be in their neighbourhood.

“In an effort to make the pickups as convenient as possible for people, we’re sending our survey team to retrieve the monitors on a neighbourhood-by-neighbourhood basis, so individual appointments are not necessary,” said John Benson, Manager Port Hope Site Characterization. “If that timing doesn’t work for a property owner, an appointment can be scheduled by phone.”

As a security measure, each property has been assigned a Site Identification Number which staff will reference when they pick up the monitors. The survey team will also wear CNL (formerly AECL) photo identification badges.

The Property Radiological Survey is divided into five campaigns. Radiological testing for properties in Campaign 1 – about 430 – has been completed. Campaign 2 radon gas monitoring is complete, and further investigations – exterior and interior gamma radiation monitoring and borehole drilling/soil sampling – are anticipated for summer/fall 2015 at about 800 properties. Schedules for Campaign 3 field work and Campaigns 4 and 5 testing are currently being developed.

“Port Hope property owners are seeing the benefits of taking part in the survey,” said Benson. “Approximately 400 property owners from Campaign 1 have now received Compliance Letters confirming that their property meets PHAI Clean-up Criteria and does not require remediation. This provides peace of mind for the owners and for the community.”

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BACKGROUND

About the Property Radiological Survey:

The Property Radiological Survey is being conducted to identify which properties have historic low-level radioactive waste and require remediation. Tests include radon monitoring, interior and exterior gamma radiation scans and borehole drilling/soil sampling. The tests are being conducted at no cost to residents. If historic low-level radioactive waste is found on a property, the PHAI will cover the cost of the cleanup and remediation.

Once a Compliance Letter is issued, owners will no longer require radiological investigations through the Low-Level Radioactive Waste Management Office's Construction Monitoring Program when applying for a building permit or require a Radiological Status Letter when selling or financing their property.

For the 10 per cent of properties expected to require some degree of cleanup, remediation activities will begin when the long-term waste management facility is ready to receive waste.

About radon:

Radon gas is found naturally in every house in Canada. It comes from naturally occurring radium that is present in almost all soil. Radon is usually not a concern but may build up in houses — especially in basements — for a variety of reasons such as cracks in the foundation, improperly trapped floor drains, uncovered sumps or dirt floors. For this reason Health Canada has extensively studied radon levels in homes over the past few years. Approximately four per cent of Ontario houses have naturally occurring radon levels above Health Canada guidelines.

Six-month radon monitoring is the first step in the PHAI Property Radiological Survey because elevated radon levels in a house or building may indicate the presence of historic low-level radioactive waste in the ground, around or under the building.

ABOUT THE PHAI

The Port Hope Area Initiative (PHAI) is a federal environmental clean-up program. Its mandate is the remediation and local, long-term, safe management of historic low-level radioactive waste in Port Hope and the Port Granby area of Southeast Clarington. The Port Hope Area Initiative Management Office (PHAI MO), a federal partnership between Natural Resources Canada, Canadian Nuclear Laboratories and Public Works and Government Services Canada, was created to carry out these projects.

ABOUT THE PORT HOPE PROJECT

The Port Hope Project involves the construction of a long-term waste management facility and supporting infrastructure for the safe, long-term management of approximately 1.2 million cubic metres of historic low-level radioactive waste. The project entails cleanup of the historic waste from various sites in Port Hope and its long-term maintenance and monitoring in an engineered aboveground mound.

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