

Testimony from: Dusty Donaldson, executive director & founder

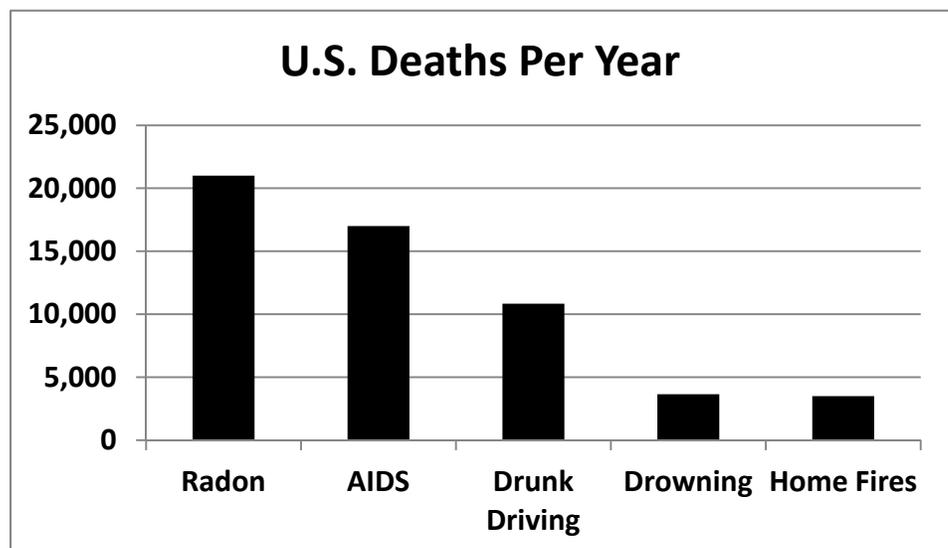
Organization: Dusty Joy Foundation, a 501 (c)(3) public charity with a mission to promote lung cancer education, early detection and compassion for those impacted by lung cancer.

RE: Reduced Budget for EPA Radon Programs

Dear Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies:

As a patient advocate, lung cancer survivor and founder of a 501c3 nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing lung cancer education, early detection and compassion for those impacted by the disease, I am here to testify on behalf of more than 20,000 Americans who will be diagnosed with radon-induced lung cancer this year. Thank you for granting me the opportunity to respond to the announcement that EPA funding for radon programs may be reduced. I was diagnosed with lung cancer six years ago. Only 15 percent of lung cancer patients survive five years, so I believe I have a responsibility to speak out for those unable to speak. I am grateful for your time and attention.

According to the EPA, more than 20,000 Americans will die from radon-induced lung cancer this year. Radon kills more Americans each year than AIDS, drunk driving, home fires or drowning.¹ The chart (right) illustrates lives lost to radon compared to other health risks.



Approximately **17,000**

Americans will die from AIDS this year;² **10,839** will die as a result of drunk driving;³ **3,650** will drown this year;⁴ and **3,500** will die in home fires.⁵ These other risks are well known. But the American public knows little about the risks of radon.

¹ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency website www.epa.gov/radon/

² U.S. Department of Health & Human Services website: <http://www.aids.gov/hiv-aids-basics/hiv-aids-101/overview/statistics/>

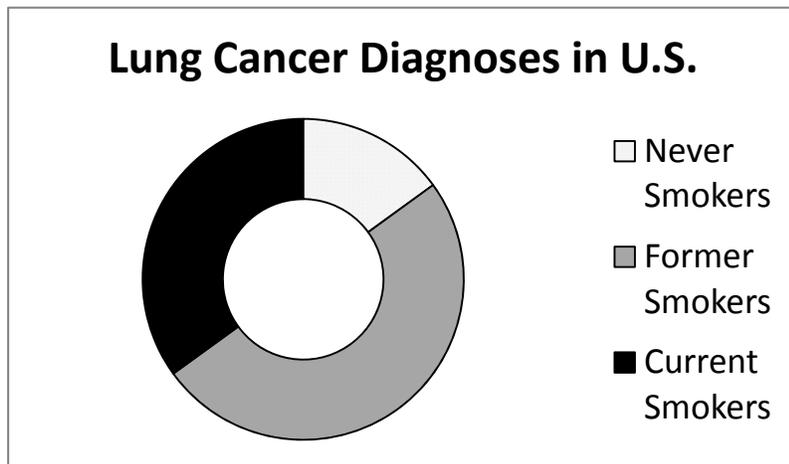
³ Centers for Disease Control website, http://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/impaired_driving/impaired_drv_factsheet.html

⁴ Factsheet on Centers for Disease Control website, www.cdc.gov/homeandrecreationsafety/water-safety/waterinjuries-factsheet.html

One person who never smoked but died from lung cancer was Dorothy Blosser from Virginia's Shenandoah Valley. She was a Mennonite pastor's wife. After her diagnosis, her family discovered the radon level in the home was nearly 10 times the EPA's action level.

Lung cancer is the number one cancer killer. It kills nearly twice as many women as breast cancer and three times as many men as prostate cancer. In fact, lung cancer kills more people than breast, prostate, colon and pancreatic cancers combined.

While lung cancer is the number one cancer killer, it is the least funded in terms of federal research dollars. One reason lung cancer research is underfunded is because of the stigma associated with this disease. Maybe it's subconscious. But people assume anyone with lung cancer brought it upon themselves. Think AIDS.



However, consider this: Approximately 79,000 U.S. smokers will be diagnosed with lung cancer in 2012. However, almost twice that number, approximately 147,000, people who are **former or never smokers** will also be told, "You have lung cancer."

The number of radon-induced lung cancer cases could be even

higher, considering that nearly 34,000 Americans **who never smoked** will be diagnosed with lung cancer this year. The EPA estimates that more than 20,000 of these deaths are due to radon, making radon the number one cause of lung cancer in people who never smoked. And for those with a history of smoking, radon exposure greatly increases their risk for developing lung cancer.

According to the American Cancer Society, approximately 3,400 Americans die from lung cancer caused by second-hand smoke. Radon-induced lung cancer claims six times as many lives. Across the county, restaurants, office buildings and schools have become smoke free. Although the air in these buildings may be smoke free, radon in these buildings is killing 55 Americans each and every day.

Many never smokers are battling lung cancer. Abby is a 14-year-old girl living in Macon, Georgia. She has been fighting stage-4 lung cancer since she was nine. And then there's Taylor Bell, former college athlete who interned for Senator Richard Burr. Taylor was diagnosed with lung cancer at the age of 21. In Texas, there's Jerrold Dash, a former college football player.

⁵ U.S. Fire Administration/FEMA website, www.usfa.fema.gov/citizens/home_fire_prev/

Jerrold had a double lung transplant and is still fighting for every day he gets to spend with his wife and two daughters. I would love to tell you about David, Lila, Julie, Marian, Brittany, Kathryn, Beau, and many more, but time constrains me.

The Dusty Joy Foundation supports the EPA's work of warning the public about radon. One easy way to reduce lung cancer deaths is to fund radon awareness. While radon is a serious and potentially deadly problem, the test is inexpensive and easy. And, if there is a problem, fixing it is quick and less costly than most home improvement projects. Our nonprofit organization distributes free radon test kits to targeted residents in North Carolina and Virginia, along with EPA radon awareness materials.

If funds for radon programs are reduced, a message would be sent that radon awareness is unimportant...that more than 20,000 Americans do not matter. Please do not perpetuate the cruel and false assumption that people with lung cancer deserve it. Our organization's good work would also be hindered. In light of these facts, we ask that you actually *increase* radon awareness funding to the EPA.

Thank you again for your time and attention to this life-saving topic.

Warm regards,

Dusty Donaldson
336.302.7714

dusty@dustyjoy.org
www.dustyjoy.org

