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Protection of Workers Against Exposure Due to Radon

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DRAFT SAFETY GUIDE



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DRAFT

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1. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

1.1. IAEA Safety Standards Series No. SF-1 [1], Fundamental Safety Principles, presents the fundamental safety objective and ten safety principles. Requirements designed to meet the fundamental safety objective and to apply the safety principles specified in SF-1 [1], including requirements for the protection of workers exposed to sources of radiation, are established in IAEA Safety Standards Series No. GSR Part 3, Radiation Protection and Safety of Radiation Sources: International Basic Safety Standards [2], jointly sponsored by the IAEA and other international organizations.

1.2. The World Health Organization has stated that exposures due to radon are the second most important cause of lung cancer in the general population after smoking [3]. Early studies on underground miners, which demonstrated an increased incidence of lung cancer in uranium miners exposed to very high concentrations of radon and progeny, reflect the importance of protecting workers from exposure due to radon. Epidemiological studies summarized by reports of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR) [4, 5] and the publications of International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP) [6, 7] have shown significant association between radon exposure and lung cancer.

1.3. GSR Part 3 [2] establishes requirements for protection of workers against exposure due to radon. Specific recommendations related to protection against exposure due to radon are provided by IAEA Safety Standards Series No. GSG-7, Occupational Radiation Protection [8].

1.4. Recent ICRP publications [6, 7, 9] have been also considered in preparing this Safety Guide. The prerequisites for protection of workers from all sources of radiation are set out by the International Labour Organization [10]. The ILO Code of Practice on Radiation Protection of Workers [11] has also been taken into account in this Safety Guide.

OBJECTIVE

1.5. This Safety Guide provides recommendations on meeting the requirements of GSR Part 3 [2] for protection of workers against exposure to radon and its progeny¹ in existing exposure situations and planned exposure situations.

¹ Hereafter in this Safety Guide (and in the IAEA safety standards in general), the general phrase “exposure due to radon” is used, and this includes both exposure to ²²²Rn and its progeny.

1.6. This Safety Guide focuses on the identification of workplaces of concern with regard to exposure due to radon, and the implementation of requirements for radiation protection, through the application of a graded approach and the principles of justification and optimization of protection and safety. The recommendations provided in this Safety Guide are aimed at governments, regulatory bodies and other relevant authorities (especially those with little or no experience in radiation protection), employers, workers, and service providers.

SCOPE

1.7. This Safety Guide provides recommendations on the protection of workers against exposure due to radon. This includes exposure in workplaces such as buildings, underground locations, and industrial premises involving the processing of naturally occurring radioactive material (NORM)². The protection of workers in buildings with high occupancy factors for members of the public is also addressed. Exposure to ²²⁰Rn (thoron) and its progeny is also considered in the Appendix.

1.8. Recommendations on specific remedial actions and protective actions applicable to workplaces are provided in IAEA Safety Standards Series No. SSG-32, Protection of the Public Against Exposure Indoors due to Radon and Other Natural Sources of Radiation [16]. Further information is provided in Ref. [17].

STRUCTURE

1.9. Section 2 of this Safety Guide describes the framework for protection of workers due to radon. Section 3 provides recommendations on the protection of workers due to radon in existing exposure situations. Section 4 provides recommendations on the protection of workers due to radon in planned exposure situations. The Appendix provides recommendations on the protection of workers against exposure due to thoron. The Annex provides information on radon measurement protocols and measurement equipment.

² Specific information on protection from radon in workplaces, including those involving different industrial processes involving NORM is provided in Refs [12-15].

2. FRAMEWORK FOR PROTECTION OF WORKERS DUE TO RADON

TYPES OF EXPOSURE SITUATION

2.1. Based on the recommendations of ICRP Publication 103 [18], the requirements established in GSR Part 3 [2] address three different types of exposure situation: planned exposure situations, existing exposure situations and emergency exposure situations. For the protection of workers against exposure due to radon, this Safety Guide considers existing exposure situations and planned exposure situations. Radon is not likely to give rise to an emergency exposure situation.

2.2. An existing exposure situation is a situation of exposure that already exists when a decision on the need for control needs to be taken (see para. 1.20(c) of GSR Part 3 [2]). Existing exposure situations include exposure to natural sources, and also exposure due to residual radioactive material from past practices that were not subject to regulatory control or that remains after an emergency exposure situation.

2.3. Radon in dwellings and workplaces are considered as examples of existing exposure situations. Paragraph 5.1(c) of GSR Part 3 [2] states:

“The requirements for existing exposure situations...apply to:

.....

(c) Exposure due to natural sources, including:

(i) ^{222}Rn and its progeny and ^{220}Rn and its progeny, in workplaces other than those workplaces for which exposure due to other radionuclides in the uranium decay chain or the thorium decay chain is controlled as a planned exposure situation, in dwellings and in other buildings with high occupancy factors for members of the public”.

A planned exposure situation arises from the planned operation of a source or from a planned activity that results in an exposure due to a source (see para. 1.20(a) of GSR Part 3 [2]). Since provision for protection and safety can be made before embarking on the activity concerned, the associated exposures and their likelihood of occurrence can be restricted from the outset. The primary means of controlling exposure in planned exposure situations is by good design of facilities, equipment, operating procedures, and training.

2.4. Paragraph 3.4 of GSR Part 3 [2] states:

“Exposure due to natural sources is, in general, considered an existing exposure situation and is subject to the requirements in Section 5. However, the relevant requirements in Section 3 for planned exposure situations apply to:

.....

- (c) Exposure due to ^{222}Rn and to ^{222}Rn progeny and due to ^{220}Rn and to ^{220}Rn progeny in workplaces in which occupational exposure due to other radionuclides in the uranium decay chain or the thorium decay chain is controlled as a planned exposure situation.
- (d) Exposure due to ^{222}Rn and to ^{222}Rn progeny where the annual average activity concentration of ^{222}Rn in air in workplaces remains above the reference level established in accordance with para. 5.27 after the fulfilment of the requirement in para. 5.28.”

Figure 1 illustrates the approach for protection of workers against exposure due to radon in accordance with paragraph 3.4(d) of GSR Part 3 [2].

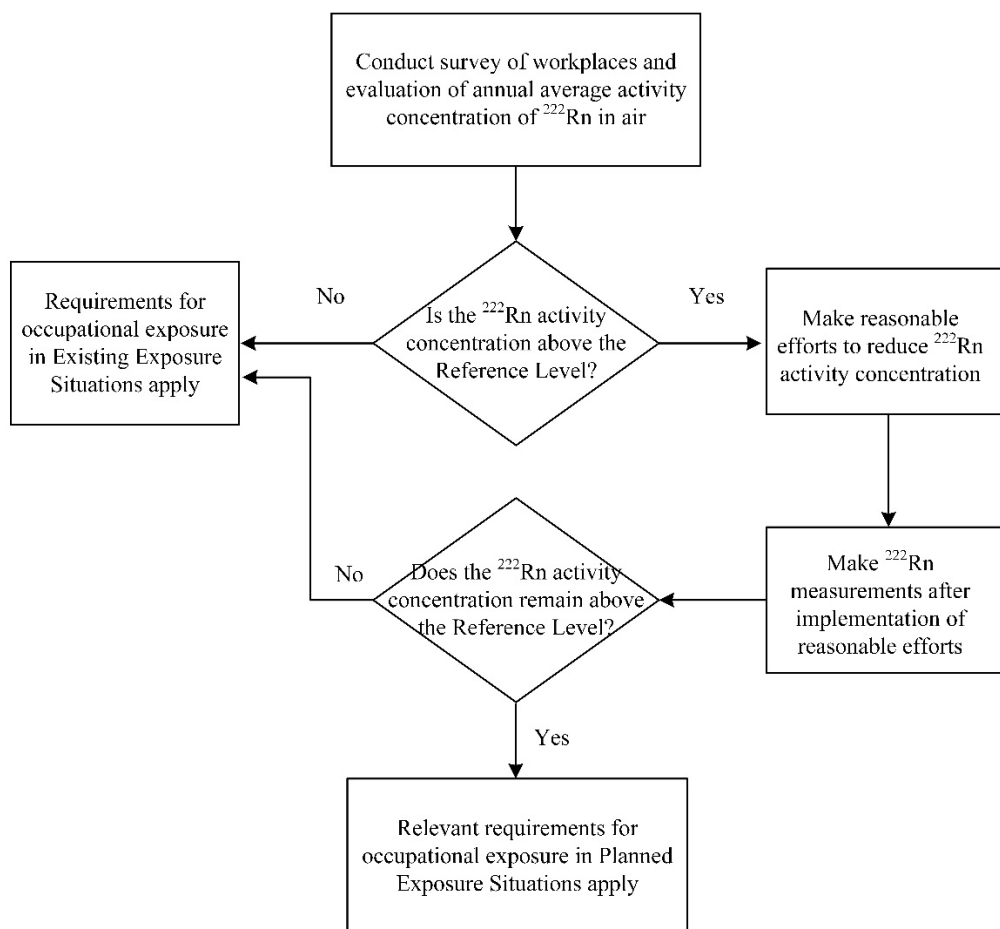


FIG: 1. Approach for protection of workers against exposure due to radon in accordance with paragraph 3.4(d) of GSR Part 3 [2].

2.5. Exposure due to radon is determined in terms of the time integral of the activity concentration of radon over a defined period of time [19]. In terms of determining the correct exposure situation, the average annual activity concentration is the quantity of interest.

PRINCIPLES OF RADIATION PROTECTION

2.6. The main principles of radiation protection are expressed in Safety Principles 4–6 of SF-1 [1]. Requirement 1 of GSR Part 3 [2] states that **“Parties with responsibilities for protection and safety shall ensure that the principles of radiation protection are applied for all exposure situations.”** The fundamental principles of radiation protection apply during the protection of workers from exposure due to radon and its progeny.

Justification

2.7. For planned exposure situations, Requirement 10 of GSR Part 3 [2] states that **“The government or the regulatory body shall ensure that only justified practices are authorized.”**

2.8. For planned exposure situations, para. 3.16 of GSR part 3 [2] (footnotes removed) states that:

The government or the regulatory body, as appropriate, shall ensure that provision is made for the justification of any type of practice and for review of the justification, as necessary, and shall ensure that only justified practices are authorized.

2.9. For existing exposure situations, para. 2.9 of GSR Part 3 [2] states that:

“For ...existing exposure situations each party with responsibilities for protection and safety shall ensure, when relevant requirements apply to that party, that protective actions or remedial actions are justified and are undertaken in such a way as to achieve the objectives set out in a protection strategy.

2.10. For existing exposure situations, Requirement 48 of GSR Part 3 [2] states that **“The government and the regulatory body or other relevant authority shall ensure that remedial actions and protective actions are justified and that protection and safety is optimized.”** Moreover, para. 5.7 of GSR Part 3 [2] states:

“The government and the regulatory body or other relevant authority shall ensure that the protection strategy for the management of existing exposure situations...is commensurate with the radiation risks associated with the existing exposure situation; and that corrective actions or protective actions are expected to yield sufficient benefits to outweigh the detriments associated with taking them, including detriments in the form of radiation risks.”

Optimization

2.11. Paragraph 1.15 of GSR Part 3 [2] states that optimization “is a process for ensuring that the likelihood and magnitude of exposures and the number of individuals exposed are as low as reasonably achievable, with economic, societal and environmental factors taken into account.”

2.12. Paragraph 1.24 of GSR Part 3 [2] states that “Reference levels are used for optimization of protection and safety in...existing exposure situations. They are established or approved by the government, the regulatory body or another relevant authority.” For existing exposure situations, Paragraph 5.8 of GSR Part 3 [2] states that “The regulatory body or other relevant authority and other parties responsible for remedial actions or protective actions shall ensure that the form, scale and duration of such actions are optimized.”

2.13. The value for the radon reference level for the protection of workers depends on the prevailing circumstances under consideration. Priority should be given to those workplaces in which the reference level is exceeded, to ensure that radon activity concentrations in these workplaces are reduced below the reference levels and then optimized to ensure that they are as low as reasonably achievable. Cost effective methods should be applied in the optimization process.

Dose limit

2.14. Dose limits only apply for planned exposure situations. Para. 3.26 of GSR Part 3 [2] states that “The government or the regulatory body shall establish and the regulatory body shall enforce compliance with the dose limits for occupational exposures and public exposures in planned exposure situations.” Dose limits for workers are detailed in Schedule III of GSR Part 3 [2].

PROTECTION STRATEGY

2.15. The government, regulatory body or other relevant authority are required to establish a legal and regulatory framework for the management of radon exposure based on graded approach. Depending on the magnitude of exposures, the number of workers exposed, and the authorities that are involved, a comprehensive radon protection strategy may be needed. The strategy should include measures to prevent the accumulation of radon in workplaces and to protect workers in areas with high radon levels. The roles of relevant authorities, such as for occupational health and safety and public health authorities, are helpful to establish and maintain an effective and cooperative regulatory regime.

2.16. Attention should be given to the characteristics and contributors to the exposure due to radon. The exposure is almost entirely from inhalation of the short-lived progeny of ^{222}Rn , which are unlikely to be in equilibrium with the parent radionuclide. Therefore, special quantities such as Potential Alpha Energy Concentration (PAEC) are used for expressing the concentration of radon progeny in air and for

estimating the resulting exposure. Recommendations on monitoring of short-lived progeny of ^{222}Rn are given in paras 2.60–2.72 of GSG-7 [8].

3. PROTECTION OF WORKERS DUE TO RADON IN EXISTING EXPOSURE SITUATIONS

RESPONSIBILITIES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT

3.1. Paragraph 5.3 of GSR Part 3 [2] states that “The government shall include in the legal and regulatory framework for protection and safety...provisions for the management of existing exposure situations.” This includes exposures due to radon in workplaces in existing exposure situations. This legal and regulatory framework should be included in the domains of radiation protection, occupational health and safety or public health, depending on which is identified as the most appropriate authority to be assigned responsibility for the control of radon in workplaces.

Identification of workplaces of concern

3.2. Requirement 47 of GSR Part 3 [2] states that: **“The government shall ensure that existing exposure situations that have been identified are evaluated to determine which occupational exposures and public exposures are of concern from the point of view of radiation protection.”** The identification of workplaces of concern should be based on the results of radon surveys, measurements in workplaces, research data, geological and topsoil data, the types of industrial operation or processing methods involving NORM, the construction materials used in buildings and the local climate conditions.

3.3. Footnote 49 of GSR Part 3 [2] states:

“In the case of exposure due to radon, the types of situation that are included in the scope of existing exposure situations will include exposure in workplaces for which the exposure due to radon is not required by or directly related to the work, and for which annual average activity concentration of ^{222}Rn might be expected not to exceed the reference level”.

There are two categories of workplaces that should be considered: above ground workplaces and below ground workplaces.

Above ground workplaces

3.4. Examples of above ground workplaces that should be assessed to determine the exposure of workers to radon include the following:

- (a) Enclosed buildings;
- (b) Workplaces where the radon levels might be elevated due to the geological conditions or due to limited ventilation;
- (c) Workplaces with high occupancy factors for members of the public (e.g. schools, childcare centres, hospitals);

- (d) Enclosed raw materials production facilities (e.g. processing facilities involving NORM);
- (e) Water treatment facilities;
- (f) Fish hatchery buildings;
- (g) Thermal spas.

3.5. It is not normally practical to measure radon in every above ground workplace: therefore, representative local surveys should be performed. The results of radon surveys of dwellings can be used to identify regions where workplaces with elevated radon levels may be located. Surveys of above ground workplaces should be designed so that information is representative of the radon activity concentration levels in the area. The data collected in such surveys should be evaluated to identify workplaces of concern. If no workplaces of concern are identified, no further action is necessary. If workplaces with exposures of concern are identified, the government should ensure that measures to address exposures in workplaces is included in the action plan (see paras 3.15 and 3.16). The results of these surveys and their evaluation should be documented and made available to the public. Information on the design of a radon survey can be found in Ref. [20].

Underground workplaces

3.6. A survey to determine radon levels in a representative sample of underground workplaces should be performed. The results of the survey should be used to decide if radon levels be measured in all underground workplaces. Examples of underground workplaces that should be surveyed to determine the exposure of workers to radon include the following:

- (a) Underground mines;
- (b) Tunnels;
- (c) Basements;
- (d) Underground laboratories;
- (e) Tourist caves;
- (f) Food storage caves (e.g. for production of wine or cheese, for cultivation of mushroom).

Justification of remedial actions and protective actions

3.7. To meet Requirement 48 of GSR Part 3 [2] (see para. 2.10 of this Safety Guide), the government should balance the benefits and detriments of actions to reduce radon level in existing exposure situations. For workplaces in existing buildings or facilities, where the annual average activity concentration of radon is below the reference level, optimization is still required (see para. 1.24 of GSR Part 3 [2]). As such, actions that are expected to yield the greatest benefits and outweigh the detriments should be implemented. These actions should be adapted to national circumstances. Detriments include any radiation risks introduced by taking the action, the cost of taking the action, and any harm or damage caused by the action.

3.8. It is not considered appropriate to allow exposures in workplaces above the radon reference level to continue (see para. 1.24 of GSR Part 3 [2]). Remedial actions and protective actions are required to be justified and optimized (see paras 5.3(b) and 5.28 of GSR Part 3 [2]), and should be implemented in the context of continual improvement of workplace safety. Workers should be informed of these actions before implementation. These actions should not conflict with other existing regulatory requirements such as energy efficiency and indoor air quality.

3.9. Remedial actions are intended to act on the source of exposure; protective actions are intended to avoid or reduce exposures, for example by acting on the exposure pathways [19]. Exposures can occur due to inhalation of radon from the earth's crust or from building materials. It can also be dissolved in water and be ingested. As stated in para. 3.7, the government is required to justify the measures for the control of radon such as controls on building materials or the use of water. Further recommendations are provided in paras 5.45–5.72 of GSG-7 [8].

Assignment of responsibilities and resources

3.10. Requirement 3 of IAEA Safety Standards Series No. GSR Part 1, Governmental, Legal and Regulatory Framework for Safety [21] states:

“The government, through the legal system, shall establish and maintain a regulatory body, and shall confer on it the legal authority and provide it with the competence and the resources necessary to fulfil its statutory obligation for the regulatory control of facilities and activities.”

3.11. The government should assign responsibility to the regulatory body or other relevant authorities to establish and implement a protection strategy for the protection of workers against exposure due to radon. The government should make provision for the effective coordination of regulatory functions where responsibilities are assigned to more than one authority for the protection of workers. The protection of workers from exposure due to radon may involve several other parties, including employers, service providers, and workers.

3.12. Paragraph 5.2 of GSR Part 3 [2] states that “The government shall ensure that, when an existing exposure situation is identified, responsibilities for protection and safety are assigned and appropriate reference levels are established.” The government should develop a plan for achieving long term objectives such as conducting radon surveys, evaluating exposures in radon prone areas, establishing building codes, taking remedial actions and protective actions for optimization of protection and safety, and communicating with the public. Sufficient financial support should be provided to support the implementation of the plan for the protection of workers from exposure due to radon.

Involvement of different parties in the development and implementation of the protection strategy for workplace exposures due to radon

3.13. In accordance with para. 5.3(d) of GSR Part 3 [2], the government is required to provide for the involvement of interested parties in decisions regarding the development and implementation of protection strategies, as appropriate. The protection of workers against exposure due to radon involves different competencies, and these parties should include authorities with responsibility for radiation safety, occupational safety, public health and building construction, as appropriate.

3.14. As part of the protection strategy for existing exposure situations, the regulatory body or other relevant authority is required to make information available to workers on the potential health risks of exposure due to radon (see para. 5.5(b) of GSR Part 3 [2]). This should include information on the risk of lung cancer due to radon exposure, and the increased risk of lung cancer due to the combination of smoking and radon. This information should also cover the importance of assessing the radon levels in workplaces, the temporal variability of radon, the use and interpretation of short term measurements and long term measurements, the remedial actions and protective actions in existing buildings and new buildings, and their effectiveness.

Establishment and implementation of an action plan for radon in the workplace

3.15. Paragraph 5.21 of GSR Part 3 [2] states that “The government shall assign responsibility for: Establishing and implementing action plan for controlling public exposure due to ²²²Rn indoors.” This action plan should also cover the implementation a protection strategy for exposure due to radon in workplaces. It should include identification of workplaces of concern, risk communication, actions for reducing radon levels in buildings and optimization of remedial actions and protective actions. The action plan should be updated and approved periodically.

3.16. The regulatory body or other relevant authority should include the following actions in relation to radon in workplaces in the action plan:

- (a) Establish an appropriate reference level for radon in workplaces;
- (b) Determine which types of workplaces might be of concern, such as workplaces in a radon prone area, type of work activities, workplaces located below ground;
- (c) Provide information on health effects and on radon levels in workplaces as part of the communication strategy;
- (d) Facilitate radon measurement at workplaces, including establishment of measurement protocols, and provisions for quality assurance of service providers of radon measurements;
- (e) Introduce specific requirements in building codes or in other regulatory documents for new buildings and for reducing radon levels in workplaces;
- (f) Develop guidelines for remedial actions and protective actions in workplaces;

- (g) Prioritize actions for reducing radon level in situations for which such actions are likely to be most effective.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE REGULATORY BODY OR OTHER RELEVANT AUTHORITY

3.17. Paragraph 5.5 of GSR Part 3 [2] states:

“The regulatory body or other relevant authority shall implement the protection strategy, including:

- (a) Arranging for evaluation of the available remedial actions and protective actions for achieving the objectives, and for evaluation of the efficiency of the actions planned and implemented;
- (b) Ensuring that information is available to individuals subject to exposure on potential health risks and on the means available for reducing their exposures and the associated risks.”

3.18. Recommendations on provision of information on radon are provided in paras 3.13–3.17 of SSG-32 [16]; these are also applicable for the protection of workers.

3.19. Paragraph 5.4 of GSR Part 3 [2] states:

“The regulatory body or other relevant authority assigned to establish a protection strategy for an existing exposure situation shall ensure that it specifies:

- (a) The objectives to be achieved by means of the protection strategy;
- (b) Appropriate reference levels.”

This includes establishing and implementing a strategy for the protection of workers against exposure due to radon.

3.20. Paragraph 5.27 of GSR Part 3 [2] states that “The reference level for ^{222}Rn shall be set at a value that does not exceed an annual average activity concentration of ^{222}Rn of 1000 Bq/m^3 , with account taken of the prevailing social and economic circumstances.”³

3.21. In accordance with para. 5.20 (a) of GSR Part 3 [2], the reference level for dwellings and other buildings with high occupancy factors for members of the public is required to not exceed an annual average radon activity concentration of 300 Bq/m^3 , taking into account the prevailing social and economic circumstances. To avoid setting different reference levels for workers and the public that occupy such buildings, the regulatory body or other relevant authority should consider a reference level

³ The value of activity concentration of 1000 Bq/m^3 corresponds to an annual effective dose of the order of 10 mSv, on the assumption of an equilibrium factor for ^{222}Rn of 0.4 and an annual occupancy of 2000 h.

that does not exceed an annual average activity concentration due to radon of 300 Bq/m³. These buildings include schools and hospitals.

3.22. The reference level for radon in workplaces should be periodically reviewed to ensure it remains appropriate for the protection of workers. The effectiveness of actions for protecting workers from radon should be evaluated and updated as part of this review.

3.23. The regulatory body or other relevant authority should establish provisions so that employers and workers are informed of the results of radon measurements, for both initial measurements and any subsequent follow-up measurements, including those made after all reasonable efforts to reduce radon levels have been undertaken by employers. The regulatory requirements for employers should include the following:

- (a) Specifying the types of workplaces in which radon measurements are needed;
- (b) Specifying conditions for follow-up measurements of radon in workplaces;
- (c) Specifying the retention time for records of measurements of radon;
- (d) The procedures for comparison of measured radon levels with the reference level;
- (e) The procedures for optimization of the radon activity concentration in the workplace.

3.24. The national or regional authority with responsibilities for building and construction safety should establish and implement building code requirements to prevent accumulation of radon indoors. These authorities should have competence in structures and ventilation systems and means of implementing building codes for construction companies and owners of buildings. The relevant authority for construction safety should specify methods for monitoring and documentation of remedial actions made to buildings to ensure their continued effectiveness. Practical guidance on actions to prevent the ingress of radon is provided in Ref. [17].

3.25. Radon measurements should be performed in the locations where workers spend a majority of their working time or where higher exposure due to radon is likely. The regulatory body or other relevant authority should establish or approve guidelines or measurement protocols to be used for radon measurements. The measurement protocol should define how to measure and interpret radon activity concentrations in workplaces.

3.26. The measurement protocol (see para. 3.25) should include guidance on the type of detector, number and placement of detectors, measurement duration, application of seasonal correction factors, acceptable uncertainties, and frequency of duplicate measurements for quality control. It should include guidance on interpreting the results to ensure that they are representative of the annual average concentration of radon in the workplace. Guidance on the measurement of ²²²Rn and its progeny is provided in Refs [22–33].

3.27. The regulatory body or other relevant authority should specify the conditions for conducting follow-up measurements following implementation of measures to reduce radon levels in the workplace.

These conditions should be specified by parameters such as change of ventilation system, renovations of foundations and floors, changes of doors and windows, and physical changes to the building that might affect the activity concentration of radon in the workplace. The Annex provides information on radon measurement protocols and equipment.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND FUNCTIONS OF EMPLOYERS

3.28. Paragraph 5.28 of GSR Part 3 [2] states that “Employers shall ensure that activity concentrations of ^{222}Rn in workplaces are as low as reasonably achievable below the reference level...and shall ensure that protection is optimized.” The responsibility for providing adequate protection of workers against radiation rests with the employer, even if the employer is a subcontractor [10].

3.29. Employers are expected to comply with any requirements specified by the regulatory body or other relevant authority on the control of exposure due to radon in workplaces. Employers should implement the reference level set by the regulatory body or relevant authority, the measurement protocols for radon in the workplace, and any remedial actions and protective actions necessary to comply with the reference level and to optimize protection. Employers who do not have the capability to make radon measurements themselves should seek a qualified service provider.

3.30. Workplaces involving the mining or processing of materials containing NORM might have elevated radon activity concentration levels. In some cases, the processes involved can increase radionuclide activity concentrations and therefore impact radon levels in the workplace. Practical guidance for specific industries involving NORM is provided in Refs [12–15].

3.31. The employer should inform workers of the health risk of exposure due to radon if exposure to elevated levels of radon is associated with their work. An information campaign should be organized, and information material should be developed for workers on the following topics:

- (a) The nature of potential health risks associated with exposures due to radon;
- (b) The radon activity concentration levels to which workers are exposed, and (for comparison) the reference level;
- (c) The requirements for protecting workers;
- (d) The methods of controlling radon levels and for optimization of protection against exposure due to radon.

3.32. If the annual average activity concentration of radon in the workplace is below the reference level, the employer should seek to further optimize protection and safety. The optimization of protection and safety should be done in consideration of other hazards and risks in the workplace such as noise, dust, and heat.

3.33. The records of radon measurements should include information on locations occupied by workers and the occupancy time. Employers should seek information on radon exposures in other workplaces that their workers may work in.

3.34. Follow-up measurements should be conducted in workplaces after construction activities, refurbishment, renovation, and after changes to workplace ventilation have been made. When renting a building, office, or any other facility for the purpose of work, the employer should request the results of any radon measurements from the owner. The owner should provide information on previous radon measurements, if available, to tenants.

3.35. Employers should consult a qualified expert for advice on implementing remedial actions for existing buildings to reduce exposures due to radon. Factors such as the annual average radon activity concentration, occupancy, complexity of the remedial actions, and the number of workers affected should be considered before implementing actions. Typical actions include the following:

- (a) Control of the ingress of radon gas into the workplace, such as sealing floors;
- (b) Active ventilation of workplaces, including powered extraction systems, air dilution systems, and soil depressurization;
- (c) Passive ventilation of workplaces, such as roof, foundation, or basement ventilators, and isolation.

For control of radon in underground workplaces (e.g. mines, caves, basements and tunnels), ventilation is of crucial importance in ensuring occupational safety and also to reduce elevated levels of radon. For workplaces with large areas, such as a factory, a combination of actions should be considered. Recommendations on ventilation in the workplace are provided in paras 9.10–9.19 of GSG-7 [8].

3.36. Cost effective remedial actions and protective actions should be implemented by the employer. However, there are workplaces (e.g. tunnels, historical buildings protected by heritage, tourist caves,) where it is not always practicable to implement such actions, other administrative measures should be considered to protection of workers (e.g. restricting working times). Recommendations on the cost effectiveness of radon control measures are provided in SSG-32 [16] and more detailed information is provided in Ref. [3].

3.37. For the construction of new buildings in radon prone areas, measures include membrane technology and air pressure control. Sometimes it is not easy to evaluate the effectiveness of preventive measures for workplaces before they are constructed, and the advice of experts on this subject should be obtained.

4. PROTECTION OF WORKERS DUE TO RADON IN PLANNED EXPOSURE SITUATIONS

4.1. Paragraph 3.4(c) of GSR Part 3 [2] states that the relevant requirements for planned exposure situations apply to exposures due to radon “in workplaces in which occupational exposure due to other radionuclides in the uranium decay chain or the thorium decay chain is controlled as a planned exposure situation.” Such workplaces include mines and processing facilities for uranium, and may include other industrial activities involving other types of NORM [8], where workers are considered occupationally exposed and therefore their exposure should be managed using the relevant requirements established for occupational exposure. Recommendations on the protection of workers in such facilities are provided in paras 3.159–3.181 of GSG-7 [8], and supporting practical guidance is provided in Refs [12–15]. The protection of workers against exposure due to radon in such workplaces is not considered further in this Safety Guide.

4.2. Paragraph 3.4(d) of GSR Part 3 [2] states that the relevant requirements for planned exposure situations apply to “Exposure due to ^{222}Rn and to ^{222}Rn progeny where the annual average activity concentration of ^{222}Rn in air in workplaces remains above the reference level”.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT

4.3. Paragraph 2.17 of GSR Part 3 [2] states that “The government shall ensure that the regulatory body has the legal authority, competence and resource to fulfil its functions and responsibilities.” The government should consider whether other relevant authorities also have responsibilities regarding exposure of workers due to radon in planned exposure situations. The government should assign sufficient human and financial resources to any such other relevant authorities.

4.4. Paragraph 2.19 of GSR Part 3 [2] states:

“The government shall establish mechanisms to ensure that:

- (a) The activities of the regulatory body are coordinated with those of other governmental authorities...and with national and international organizations that have related responsibilities;
- (b) Interested parties are involved as appropriate in regulatory decision-making processes or regulatory decision aiding processes.”

RESPONSIBILITIES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE REGULATORY BODY OR OTHER RELEVANT AUTHORITY

4.5. Requirement 3 of GSR Part 3 [2] states that: **“The regulatory body shall establish or adopt regulations and guides for protection and safety and shall establish a system to ensure their implementation.”**

4.6. Requirement 6 of GSR Part 3 [2] states that **“The application of the requirements of [GSR Part 3] in planned exposure situations shall be commensurate with the characteristics of the practice or the source within a practice, and with the likelihood and magnitude of exposures.”**

4.7. Protection of workers against exposure due to radon should focus on workplaces with high radon levels and high occupancy, such as underground mines, tunnels, ground floor and below ground offices and laboratories. The regulatory body or other relevant authority should implement a graded approach in selecting the relevant requirements for planned exposure situations that should apply, such as requirements for authorization and for implementation of a radiation protection programme.

4.8. Requirement 20 of GSR Part 3 [2] states that: **“The regulatory body shall establish and enforce requirements for the monitoring and recording of occupational exposures in planned exposure situations.”** The regulatory body or other relevant authority should determine which of these requirements apply to workers who receive exposures due to radon. Verification of compliance with the radon reference level should be conducted during inspections of workplaces for which exposure due to radon has been determined to be a planned exposure situation.

4.9. The regulatory body or other relevant authority should establish requirements for the notification and authorization of workplaces in which the radon activity concentration remains above the reference level (i.e. as specified in para. 3.4 (d) of GSR Part 3 [2]). These requirements should specify the regulatory body or other relevant authority to be notified, the responsibility of employers to undertake the notification, the information to be included in the notification and the time frame. With regard to applications for authorization, the information to be supplied (e.g. the results of prior radiological evaluations or safety assessments) should be specified by the regulatory body or other relevant authority.

4.10. The regulatory body or other relevant authority should provide guidance on the methodology for the assessment of exposures due to radon. The guidance should include information on how to address parameters such as the equilibrium factor, dose conversion factor, occupancy factor, breathing rate, distribution of the aerosol and the unattached fraction, as appropriate. The values for these parameters should be realistic and specific to the type of workplace.

4.11. If a national dose registry is available (see para. 7.265 of GSG-7 [8]), the results of individual monitoring of workers for exposure due to radon should be incorporated. The data provided to the national dose registry should include the method used in the dose assessment, the results of dose assessment, and characteristics of the workplaces.

Provision for service providers

4.12. Para. 3.73 of GSR Part 3 [2] states that: “The regulatory body shall be responsible, as appropriate, for...Authorization or approval of service providers for individual monitoring or calibration services.” With regard to the assessment of occupational exposures due to radon, the regulatory body or other relevant authority should verify that the service provider has an adequate administrative, technical and management system, and is technically competent to provide results.

4.13. The regulatory body or other relevant authority should specify the requirements for service providers for radon measurement. These provisions include the following:

- (a) A management system including the organizational structure, arrangements for personnel training, and for acquiring, calibrating, operating and maintaining equipment;
- (b) Methods and procedures for radon measurements that follow appropriate codes and standards;
- (c) Accreditation in accordance with national requirements or relevant standards;
- (d) Reporting to the national radon database, as appropriate.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND FUNCTIONS OF EMPLOYERS

4.14. Requirement 21 of GSR Part 3 [2] states:

“Employers, registrants and licensees shall be responsible for the protection of workers against occupational exposure. Employers, registrants and licensees shall ensure that protection and safety is optimized and that the dose limits for occupational exposure are not exceeded.”

In optimizing the overall protection and safety of workers in planned exposure situations, the employers should consider other occupational health and safety issues. Optimization of protection and safety is a prospective and iterative process for ensuring the likelihood and the magnitude of exposures.

4.15. When implementing controls for radon in planned exposure situations, a management system should be established to monitor and maintain these controls to ensure that they remain effective over time. Employers should develop a system that includes regular review and assessment of the effectiveness of radon controls, radon measurements, dose assessment, and information sharing. Employers should also take steps to progressively develop an understanding of how radon builds up in the workplace and the specific actions that are necessary for protection of workers.

Workplace monitoring

4.16. The radon activity concentration in the workplace should be monitored, either by active real time measurements or by long term passive measurements. Real time measurements should be used when information on the variability of ^{222}Rn with time and location is needed, while passive detectors should

be used when long term average activity concentrations in the workplace are needed. Monitoring of ^{222}Rn progeny is encouraged, as appropriate. For example, monitoring of ^{222}Rn progeny will more precisely assess the exposure of miners.

4.17. For workplaces where annual average radon concentrations are above the reference level based on measurements with passive systems, active monitoring should be used to identify whether high radon levels occur during working hours. Employers should ensure that exposures due to radon are estimated based on monitoring during working hours, in areas where workers are present, and which take into account the breathing zones of workers.

4.18. The calibration of passive radon detectors and continuous active monitors should be traceable to primary or secondary radon standards. National or international intercomparisons should be performed.

Notification and communication

4.19. The employer should notify the regulatory body or other relevant authority when the annual average radon activity concentration remains above the reference level despite all reasonable efforts by the employer. The information and documentation to be provided as part of the notification should include the following:

- (a) The methods used to measure the activity concentrations of ^{222}Rn and, where appropriate, its progeny, and the results of these measurements;
- (b) Identification and description of the workplaces, including a description of the arrangements for the ventilation of these workplaces;
- (c) Estimation of maximum annual working hours for workers in the areas with elevated radon levels, and the associated estimated individual doses;
- (d) A description of the remedial actions and protective actions taken to reduce radon activity concentrations, and their effectiveness.

Instruction and training

4.20. Paragraph 3.110 of GSR Part 3 [2] states:

“Employers, in cooperation with registrants and licensees:

- (a) Shall provide all workers with adequate information on health risks due to their occupational exposure in normal operation, anticipated operational occurrences and accident conditions, adequate instruction and training and periodic training in protection and safety, and adequate information on the significance of their actions for protection and safety”.

4.21. The employers should provide workers with information about protection against exposure due to radon and its progeny. Special attention should be paid to newly recruited workers. The information

and knowledge should be included in the introductory training before taking up their assignments. The following should be included in the instruction and training:

- (a) The radon reference level;
- (b) Information on the working areas with elevated radon levels based on measurements;
- (c) The arrangements for monitoring of workplaces or workers;
- (d) The arrangements for keeping records;
- (e) Any arrangements for health surveillance for workers;
- (f) The methods for evaluating the exposure of workers due to radon.

Radiation protection programme

4.22. Requirement 24 of GSR Part 3 [2] states:

“Employers, registrants and licensees shall establish and maintain organizational, procedural and technical arrangements for the designation of controlled areas and supervised areas, for local rules and for monitoring of the workplace, in a radiation protection programme for occupational exposure.”

When developing the radiation protection programme, employers should ensure that assessment and control of occupational exposure due to radon are based on radon measurements (including, as appropriate, progeny), the characteristics of the workplace and exposure pathways.

4.23. Administrative controls to reduce the occupancy of workers in areas with high radon levels may be part of the radiation protection programme. Restricting access to the area with elevated levels of radon is only suitable for those areas within workplaces where occupancy is already low or when it is not possible to implement actions to reduce radon levels.

4.24. Job rotation should not be used as a substitute for reducing the radon activity concentration in the workplace. However, in some cases job rotation may need to be considered as part of the radiation protection programme to restrict the exposure of individual workers in work areas with high radon levels. Job rotation should be carefully planned before being implemented.

4.25. Requirements for the radiation protection programme are established in paras 3.88–3.98 of GSR Part 3 [2], and further recommendations are provided in paras 3.49–3.158 of GSG-7 [8]. The main components that should be considered in a radiation protection programme for occupational exposures due to radon are as follows:

- (a) Scope and description of the programme;
- (b) The use and functions of qualified experts;
- (c) Designation of areas and workplace monitoring;
- (d) Local rules and supervision;
- (e) Personal protective equipment (as appropriate);

- (f) Work planning;
- (g) Monitoring and assessment of exposures due to radon;
- (h) Health surveillance (if appropriate);
- (i) Information, instruction, and training, (including, as appropriate qualification and certification of workers);
- (j) Notifications and authorizations (as appropriate) and record keeping;
- (k) Arrangements for quality assurance, audit and review.

Protection of pregnant workers

4.26. Requirement 28 of GSR Part 3 [2] states: “**Employers, registrants and licensees shall make special arrangements for female workers, as necessary, for protection of the embryo or fetus and breastfed infants.**” As the exposure due to radon is mainly to the lungs, the embryo or fetus is not significantly exposed [34, 35]. Therefore, additional controls in relation to exposure to radon should not be necessary for pregnant workers.

Protection of itinerant workers

4.27. The requirements of GSR Part 3 [2] apply to all workers and the same level of protection against exposure due to radon is required to be provided to itinerant workers as to full time workers. Employers should consider itinerant workers when addressing the exposure due to radon.

4.28. Itinerant workers should be provided with the same information on the risks associated with exposure due to radon as that provided to full time workers. The relevant procedures, records and arrangements for monitoring and health surveillance should be made available to the itinerant workers by their employers. More information is provided in Ref. [36].

4.29. The measurement programme for radon in workplaces and relevant records should not discriminate between full time workers and itinerant workers. The programme should be made available to itinerant workers and their employers. The arrangement for protection of itinerant workers should be reviewed periodically to ensure effective optimization of protection and safety. Further recommendations on the protection of itinerant workers are provided in paras 6.21–6.100 of GSG-7 [8].

COMPLIANCE BY WORKERS

4.30. Requirement 22 of GSR Part 3 [2] states that: “**Workers shall fulfil their obligations and carry out their duties for protection and safety.**” Further requirements for compliance by workers are established in paras 3.83–3.84 of GSR Part 3 [2]. In addition, Section 2.3 of the ILO Code of Radiation Protection of Workers [10] states:

“Workers should follow, as instructed by the employer, all rules, regulations and working procedures for the control of exposure to radiations and radioactive materials in the working environment in order to protect their own health as well as that of their colleagues.”

These obligations apply to work in areas with elevated radon levels. Workers are encouraged to discuss with employers the optimization of protection and safety and the process of continuous improvement of working safely in accordance with the ILO Code of Practice on Radiation Protection of Workers [11].

QUALIFICATION OF SERVICE PROVIDERS FOR PROTECTION OF WORKERS AGAINST EXPOSURE DUE TO RADON

4.31. Service providers should comply with requirements set by the regulatory body or other relevant authorities. These services include measurement of radon, calibration of radon detectors, guidance on remedial actions for existing buildings, design of measures to reduce radon levels in new buildings, and the provision of advice as qualified experts on radon exposure. Service providers for radon measurements, calibration, consultancy, or techniques to reduce radon levels in buildings should be qualified in accordance with procedures approved by the regulatory body. Recommendations on the management system for providers of technical services are provided in Section 8 of GSG-7 [8].

4.32. Service providers should only provide services for which they can demonstrate competence. Service providers for general radiation protection services might not have adequate competence with respect to protection against exposures to radon and its progeny. For example, a service provider for calibration services might not have competency to provide services related to the selection and implementation of radon remedial actions and protective actions. Operating organizations should ensure that the selected service providers are competent in the specific area. Service providers should be able to demonstrate impartiality and independence in relation to the services they provide.

4.33. Service providers for radon measurement should establish and maintain a quality management system (see also para. 3.99 of GSR Part 3 [2]). This system should include standard operating procedures together with arrangements for recording the results of measurements. The quality management system should follow Ref. [37] or equivalent national validation scheme or protocol.

APPENDIX: PROTECTION OF WORKERS AGAINST EXPOSURE DUE TO THORON

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF EXPOSURES DUE TO THORON

A.1. Thoron (radon-220) has a half-life of 55.6 seconds and can migrate only a short distance before decay. For this reason, indoor activity concentrations depend primarily on the emanation of thoron from the surface of walls and floors: concentrations vary markedly across distances as short as one metre. Earth walls and floors have been found to be significant sources of thoron in some cases. Special attention should be paid to the production of construction materials that are a source of thoron.

A.2. In enclosed workplaces, the spatial distribution of thoron is very different from that of its progeny. The magnitude of the consequent doses will depend on the amount of ^{232}Th present in the soil and materials, the rate of emanation of thoron and the occupancy factor for the building [16]. Elevated thoron concentrations usually occur in areas where naturally occurring thorium concentrations are elevated, such as in areas where there are mineral sands or products containing thorium.

A.3. The worldwide average activity concentration of thoron (indoors and outdoors) is approximately 10 Bq/m^3 [38]. Airborne thoron activity concentrations are very variable, ranging over orders of magnitude in a typical 24 hour cycle, from 1 Bq/m^3 to 1000 Bq/m^3 . Measurements in specific regions with high natural background levels indicate thoron activity concentrations up to 2300 Bq/m^3 [39–42].

A.4. The dose conversion factors for thoron and its progeny are higher than for radon and its progeny. Of the various thoron progeny, ^{212}Pb and ^{212}Bi contribute 91% and 9%, respectively to the total potential alpha energy. Because ^{212}Pb contributes almost all the total potential alpha energy, its activity concentration can be used as a surrogate for potential alpha energy concentration. The assessment of risks needs to take the presence of thoron and its progeny into account [43].

A.5. The government or regulatory body should establish requirements if there are workplaces where significant occupational exposures due to thoron occur. If so, requirements in relation to the protection of workers against such exposures should be developed. Recommendations and guidance on the management of exposures due to thoron are provided in SSG-32 [16] (for public exposure to thoron) and in Refs [12, 44] (for occupational exposure).

MANAGEMENT OF EXPOSURE DUE TO THORON

A.6. Attention should be given to occupational exposure due to thoron in workplaces involving minerals containing elevated levels of ^{232}Th , such as monazite mines and processing facilities. The exposure in such workplaces is required to be controlled as a planned exposure situation rather than an existing exposure situation (see para. 3.4(a) of GSR Part 3 [2]).

A.7. The approach to management of radon in workplaces can also be applied to thoron. For example, it may normally be assumed that the same remedial actions and protective actions that are taken to reduce exposure to radon will also reduce exposure due to thoron.

A.8. In most workplaces, exposures due to thoron will not need to be subject to regulatory control. In countries where high activity concentrations of thoron are found in some workplaces, the regulatory body or other relevant authority should consider establishing a reference level for thoron. The recommendations provided in SSG-32 [16] on setting a radon reference level should also be applicable to setting a reference level for thoron. Exposure to thoron should be assessed through either individual monitoring or else estimated from workplace monitoring results. Ref. [5] provides further information.

A.9. In workplaces where high activity concentrations of thoron progeny are present, these can normally be substantially reduced by the methods applied to reduce the indoor activity concentrations of thoron. Due to the high spatial variability (see para. A.1), ensuring that rooms are occupied away from the walls is effective in reducing the inhalation of thoron.

Preventive measures for workplaces in new buildings

A.10. Consideration should be given to preventive measures that can be applied during the construction of new buildings in thoron prone areas. The regulatory body or other relevant authority should establish a basis for identifying those buildings and take appropriate measures in the design and construction. The effectiveness of the measures should be checked. Appropriate building codes and guidance on construction practices should be developed by the relevant authority. Consideration should be given to building materials that have elevated concentrations of ^{232}Th .

A.11. The regulatory body or other relevant authority should consider if restrictions are required on the use of building materials that have been found to emit significant quantities of thoron (see para. 5.22 of GSR part 3 [2]). Further recommendations are provided in paras 3.65–3.67 of SSG-32 [16].

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ANNEX: PROTOCOLS AND EQUIPMENT FOR MEASUREMENT OF RADON

A-1. This Annex provides an overview of protocols for measurement of radon and its progeny, and of measurement devices and techniques. Though radon progeny contributes most of the dose, measurements of radon are generally simpler and more cost effective than measurements of its progeny.

RADON MEASUREMENT PROTOCOLS

Objective and contents of radon measurement protocols

A-2. The results of radon measurement are used to inform both employers and workers on the level of exposure of workers (and hence the associated health risks), and the need for the optimization of the protection.

A-3. The objective of measurements is to be assess the activity concentration of radon and, where appropriate, its progeny. The measurement protocol may include the following:

- (a) Criteria for measurement systems;
- (b) Quality assurance;
- (c) The method for determining the location and number of measurement points;
- (d) Sampling duration;
- (e) The approach to dealing with measurement uncertainties;
- (f) The application of seasonal correction factors, if appropriate;
- (g) Comparing the annual average activity concentration with the reference level;
- (h) The frequency or other conditions for repeat measurements;
- (i) The criteria for additional investigations.

Measurement systems for radon in workplaces

A-4. The detectors for radon are usually not sensitive to thoron. Passive detectors such as solid state nuclear track detectors are commonly used for long term radon measurements in workplaces. The measurements provide results over a specific period. Continuous radon monitoring can also be used for measurement of radon activity concentration in workplaces. The type of monitor provides a time series of the radon activity concentration over the measurement period. Continuous radon monitors identify the variation of radon activity concentration (e.g. daily, seasonal, activities, occupancy periods) so as to provide information to better assess the exposure of workers.

Calibration and quality management for radon measurements

A-5. Continuous radon monitors are usually calibrated individually by an authorized organization, which could be the manufacturer or service agent. Equipment used for radon measurements needs to be calibrated at regular intervals, as recommended by the manufacturer (typically annually), and following any repair or certain types of maintenance. Following calibration, a certificate is provided, which includes the calibration date, results of the test and the traceability to international or national standards.

A-6. Passive devices are calibrated in batches under different conditions, such as a controlled radon concentration and at a specified temperature and humidity. In certain cases, calibration at different activity concentrations can be performed.

Duration of radon measurements

A-7. Measurements need to be capable of determining the annual average activity concentration of ^{222}Rn in the workplace (e.g. taking into account the measurement season and duration of exposure). The most reliable way is to make measurements for a whole year. However, shorter sampling durations can be used if they are considered capable of providing results that are representative of the annual average radon level. This can be achieved by placing detectors for an entire year, or else using a series of detectors placed in periods of more than two months to cover the whole year.

Seasonal correction factor for radon measurements

A-8. In some countries, seasonal correction factors are applied to measurements results, so that the results of measurements taken over part of a year can be extrapolated to provide an annual average. Seasonal correction factors are dependent on local factors such as climate, the type of building and the characteristics of the workplace. They are not applicable to other situations unless they have been evaluated as also being appropriate for wider use.

A-9. Reference [A-1] provides methodologies for radon measurements, including long term measurements with a minimum duration of two months. According to Ref. [A-1], at least half of the measurement period needs to be in winter or during the heating season. In addition, the measurements need to be performed during a period when the number of consecutive days during which the premises are unoccupied does not exceed 20%.

A-10. If the sampling duration does not cover an entire year, the best sampling time needs to be determined, which can be different from that derived from the normal seasonal behavior in buildings (e.g. due to specific variations in natural or mechanical ventilation in underground workplaces, times with higher work capacity, and workplaces with different occupancy factors during specific seasons such as tourist sites and schools).

Location and number of radon measurement points

A-11. The evaluation of the annual average activity concentration of radon may involve measurements in different zones within the workplace. Passive detectors are relatively inexpensive: therefore, it can be cost effective to make measurements in several locations within the workplace to establish a more targeted protection strategy. Where a workplace consists of different types of working area, each area could be considered separately for the purpose of radon measurements.

A-12. Basement or ground floor rooms are likely to have the highest radon concentrations. It is not necessary to carry out measurements in areas that are unoccupied or are occupied infrequently. An infrequently occupied area is generally place where an individual is unlikely to spend more than 50 hours per year [A-2].

A-13. The radon activity concentration can vary significantly between adjacent buildings. Consequently, it is usually necessary to make measurements in each separate building. For multi-story buildings, measurements made on the ground floor and in basements (all levels) are the most important for assessing compliance with the reference level for workplaces. Nevertheless, it may also be useful to perform some measurements on upper floors (see also Table A-1).

A-14. The locations of radon detectors need to be representative in terms of the exposure of workers. Usually, the detectors are not placed in enclosed spaces nor directly in a source of fresh air, such as a ventilation intake. Ideally, detectors are placed in the breathing zone of workers, but in any case, at least one meter above the floor, away from heat sources, and at least 25 cm from walls or openings. Radon detectors are not to be moved during the measurement period. Several ways to ensure secure positioning of detectors may be used, for example, tamper-proof tape.

A-15. As part of the radon measurement protocol, the details of the measurement location and the dates on which measurements start and end are recorded. Locations in workplaces to be considered for measurement of radon include:

- (a) Rooms or areas that are occupied on a regular basis for more than four hours a day;
- (b) All underground rooms and areas that could be used by individuals for more than 50 hours per year (about one hour per week);
- (c) Any other rooms or areas where there are reasons to believe that radon levels might be of concern.

A-16. References [A-3, A-4] provide examples of guidance and methodologies for radon measurements in individual Member States. Reference [A-2] contains guidelines for the locations for radon measurements in industrial workplaces: Table A-1 summarizes the guidelines on the number of radon detectors needed. According to Ref. [A-2], the rooms and areas considered for measurement are those that are occupied on a regular basis for more than 4 hours a day. Other areas to be considered include underground basement rooms or areas, where there is a significant risk of radon, and which could be used by individuals for more than 50 hours per year (about one hour per week).

TABLE A-1. INDUSTRIAL RADON MEASUREMENT GUIDELINES ON THE PLACEMENT OF RADON DETECTORS IN A WORKPLACE [A-3].

Location	Number of radon detectors
Basement and ground floor	One detector in all rooms or areas. For larger rooms or areas, place at least one detector per 150 m ²
Higher floors	At least two detectors per floor and at least one detector per 250 m ²

Comparing radon measurement result with the reference level

A-17. The measurement protocol is expected to describe how to evaluate the results of radon measurements in the workplace against the reference level. This includes determining the annual average radon activity concentration to compare directly with the reference level. The protocol may also define whether the evaluation is done for the entire workplace, whole buildings or defined areas, whether a reliable estimate of the annual average activity concentration can be obtained with short duration measurements, and how to ensure that any uncertainties are acceptable.

Frequency of evaluation or other conditions for repeated measurements

A-18. The need to repeat measurements of radon levels in the workplace will normally be specified by the regulatory body or other relevant authority. In some cases, it may be necessary to perform follow-up measurements in the workplace, for example using active instruments to evaluate exposures during and outside working hours.

Measurements of radon progeny

A-19. Measurements of radon progeny are usually more complicated than measurements of radon gas. Radon progeny is mainly attached to fine dust particles in air and have relatively short half-lives. As such, they need to be sampled and analyzed relatively quickly (within approximately 30 minutes). This is normally done by taking an air sample through a filter and then analyzing the filter.

RADON MEASUREMENT EQUIPMENT

Types of radon measurement

A-20. There are several different types of radon monitoring equipment, which are selected based on the intended use of measurement results. Such equipment may also be capable of discriminating between radon and thoron, and some equipment is designed to measure radon progeny. It is important that the selected measurement instruments are suitable for the environmental conditions (e.g. humidity, temperature, dust) in which they will be used. The main types of radon measurement equipment are as follows [A-5]:

- (a) Electret ion chambers;

- (b) Solid state nuclear track detectors;
- (c) Gamma spectrometry (e.g. using activated charcoal sampling);
- (d) Scintillation detectors;
- (e) Alpha spectrometry;

A-1. Passive detectors are simple to use, inexpensive and are suitable for large scale surveys (e.g. involving hundreds or even thousands of measurements); however, the analysis of the results may be more complicated.

A-2. Passive radon dosimeters rely on the natural diffusion of radon gas through a filter (to remove radon progeny) into the sensitive volume of the detector. Passive alpha track dosimeters use solid state nuclear track detectors that are exposed for a specified period and then assessed using a chemical or electrochemical etching process. The number of tracks formed on the foil can be counted to assess the radon exposure.

A-3. Electret ion chambers are passive devices that measure average radon activity concentration during the period. The electret contains a positively charged plate inside an ionization chamber. Radon gas enters the ionization chamber by diffusion through a filter. Radon and the decay products formed in the chamber ionize the air in the chamber. The negative ions are collected on the positive electrode. The discharge of the electret over a period is related to radon concentration.

A-4. Another passive method for measuring radon uses activated charcoal, which absorbs radon from the air within the pore space of the charcoal granules for a defined period. Once the sampling has concluded, the charcoal is sealed and the gamma rays from the radon decay products are analyzed using gamma spectrometry. The results are then converted to radon activity concentration using a calibration factor. These measurements are sensitive to humidity and biased by the equilibrium between adsorption and desorption, and generally are suited only for short term measurements.

A-5. Electronic integrating devices are active devices that use solid state nuclear track detectors within a diffusion chamber for counting alpha particles emitted by radon decay products. It provides a cumulative value that represents the average concentration over the monitoring period.

A-6. Continuous radon monitors are active devices that collect air for analysis via a pump or allow air containing radon and its decay products to diffuse into a sensor chamber. The air sample containing radon and its progeny is analyzed inside the chamber. Continuous radon monitors also include electrical current or pulse ionization chambers, scintillation cells and solid state nuclear track detectors.

Monitoring of radon progeny

A-7. Monitoring of radon progeny generally involves active air sampling in which a known volume of air is drawn through a filter. The alpha or beta radiation emitted from the filter is counted during or after sampling. Some methods determine gross activity, while others determine the concentrations of

individual radon progeny. For gross alpha counting, the detection is often done simply with a scintillator disc mounted on a photomultiplier tube and placed a short distance from the filter at atmospheric pressure. Alpha spectroscopy can be used to determine the activity of individual radon progeny.

REFERENCES TO ANNEX

- [A-1] INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR STANDARDIZATION, Measurement of Radioactivity in the Environment — Air: Radon-222 — Part 8: Methodologies for Initial and Additional Investigations in Buildings, ISO Standard 11665-8:2012, ISO, Geneva (2019).
- [A-2] INTERNATIONAL RADON MEASUREMENT ASSOCIATION, Industrial radon measurement guideline to get an overall view of the radon concentration in a workplace, IRMA 0791-30 (2017).
- [A-3] HEALTH CANADA, Guide for Radon Measurements in Public Buildings (Workplaces, Schools, Day Cares, Hospitals, Care Facilities, Correctional Centres) (2016).
- [A-4] SWEDISH RADIATION SAFETY AUTHORITY, Metodbeskrivning för radonmätning på arbetsplatser (2021).
- [A-5] INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR STANDARDIZATION, Measurement of Radioactivity in the Environment — Air: Radon-222 — Part 1: Origins of Radon and Its Short-Lived Decay Products and Associated Measurement Methods, ISO Standard 11665-1:2019, ISO, Geneva (2019).

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