

HOME SAFETY

Homeowners Discover A New “Intruder”

(NAPSA)—Today’s housing market has thrown a number of curves at buyers and sellers. But now experts say a newly discovered problem is further raising the financial risk of buying certain homes—and that it may even affect a family’s health regardless of whether they’re looking to sell.

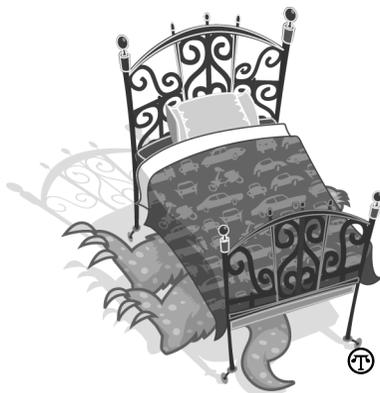
The culprit? Vapor intrusion, an indoor air-quality issue that—like asbestos and radon gas before it—is causing significant concern across the nation.

Vapor intrusion can develop in a home when evaporating volatile chemicals from polluted soil and groundwater seep near or underneath a property. Among the wide range of potential health implications that have been connected to the phenomenon are eye irritation, respiratory problems, headaches and nausea.

What’s more, experts say that long-term exposure might even raise a person’s chances of developing cancer, although the effects vary based on the individual exposed, the chemical involved and the dose and length of exposure.

Know Your Risks

In 2007, there were more than 400,000 known instances of leaking underground storage tanks and more than 1 million chemical spills in neighborhoods. That’s why it’s a good idea to look for



home inspectors offering Environmental Data Resources Inc.’s (EDR) Neighborhood Environmental Report.

“The reports help identify potential environmental risks such as leaking underground tanks, landfills and toxic waste sites on or near a property that may threaten your well-being or property value,” explains Ben Cesare, managing director of EDR residential services.

Cesare says this “snapshot” of environmental history is generated from the largest collection of local, state and federal hazard records in the U.S.

The reports can be valuable tools for both homeowners and buyers, since a property affected by contamination usually won’t have any visual indicators. Home-

owners, specifically, could face liability risks or loss of value when it comes time to sell.

Protect Your Home

Fortunately, the presence of vapor intrusion isn’t necessarily cause to pass on buying a house, since a number of ways exist to get rid of such airborne contaminants.

For instance, you might be able to simply seal cracks in a home’s foundation or install a ventilation system similar to those used to remove radon gas. Other alternatives include adjusting the home’s heating and air-conditioning systems to maintain a positive pressure inside the house to prevent vapors from infiltrating.

A Growing Problem

Environmental professionals are discovering that vapor intrusion may be more widespread than once thought. The chemical fumes that seep into homes are often from former gas stations or dry cleaners that were torn down long ago, as well as from current or former industrial sites. Contamination from these types of sites can travel undetected via underground plumes.

To find out if contaminants are present in your home or in a property you’re considering buying, contact an EDR-certified professional. For more information, visit the Web site www.edrnet.com.