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Measurement of radioactivity in the environment — Air: radon-222 —

Part 6: Spot measurement methods of the activity concentration

Mesurage de la radioactivité dans l'environnement — Air: radon 222 —
Partie 6: Méthodes de mesure ponctuelle de l'activité volumique

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

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For an explanation on the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see the following URL: www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 85, *Nuclear energy, nuclear technologies, and radiological protection*, Subcommittee SC 2, *Radiological protection*.

This second edition cancels and replaces the first edition (ISO 11665-6:2012), of which it constitutes a minor revision. The changes compared to the previous edition are as follows:

— update of the Introduction;

— update of the Bibliography.

A list of all the parts in the ISO 11665 series can be found on the ISO website.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user’s national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

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Introduction

Radon isotopes 222, 219 and 220 are radioactive gases produced by the disintegration of radium isotopes 226, 223 and 224, which are decay products of uranium-238, uranium-235 and thorium-232 respectively, and are all found in the earth's crust (see ISO 11665-1:2019, Annex A, for further information). Solid elements, also radioactive, followed by stable lead are produced by radon disintegration[1].

When disintegrating, radon emits alpha particles and generates solid decay products, which are also radioactive (polonium, bismuth, lead, etc.). The potential effects on human health of radon lie in its solid decay products rather than the gas itself. Whether or not they are attached to atmospheric aerosols, radon decay products can be inhaled and deposited in the bronchopulmonary tree to varying depths according to their size[2][3][4][5].

Radon is today considered to be the main source of human exposure to natural radiation. UNSCEAR[6] suggests that, at the worldwide level, radon accounts for around 52 % of global average exposure to natural radiation. The radiological impact of isotope 222 (48 %) is far more significant than isotope 220 (4 %), while isotope 219 is considered negligible (see ISO 11665-1:2019, Annex A). For this reason, references to radon in this document refer only to radon-222.

Radon activity concentration can vary from one to more orders of magnitude over time and space. Exposure to radon and its decay products varies tremendously from one area to another, as it depends on the amount of radon emitted by the soil and building materials, weather conditions, and on the degree of containment in the areas where individuals are exposed.

As radon tends to concentrate in enclosed spaces like houses, the main part of the population exposure is due to indoor radon. Soil gas is recognized as the most important source of residential radon through infiltration pathways. Other sources are described in other parts of ISO 11665 and ISO 13164 series for water[7].

Radon enters into buildings via diffusion mechanism caused by the all-time existing difference between radon activity concentrations in the underlying soil and inside the building, and via convection mechanism inconstantly generated by a difference in pressure between the air in the building and the air contained in the underlying soil. Indoor radon activity concentration depends on radon activity concentration in the underlying soil, the building structure, the equipment (chimney, ventilation systems, among others), the environmental parameters of the building (temperature, pressure, etc.) and the occupants' lifestyle.

To limit the risk to individuals, a national reference level of 100 $Bq \cdot m^{-3}$ is recommended by the World Health Organization[5]. Wherever this is not possible, this reference level should not exceed 300 $Bq \cdot m^{-3}$. This recommendation was endorsed by the European Community Member States that shall establish national reference levels for indoor radon activity concentrations. The reference levels for the annual average activity concentration in air shall not be higher than 300 $Bq \cdot m^{-3}$[5].

To reduce the risk to the overall population, building codes should be implemented that require radon prevention measures in buildings under construction and radon mitigating measures in existing buildings. Radon measurements are needed because building codes alone cannot guarantee that radon concentrations are below the reference level.

The activity concentration of radon-222 in the atmosphere can be measured by spot, continuous and integrated measurement methods with active or passive air sampling (see ISO 11665-1). This document deals with radon-222 spot measurement methods.

NOTE The origin of radon-222 and its short-lived decay products in the atmospheric environment and other measurement methods are described generally in ISO 11665-1.

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Measurement of radioactivity in the environment — Air: radon-222 —

Part 6: Spot measurement methods of the activity concentration

1 Scope

This document describes radon-222 spot measurement methods. It gives indications for carrying out spot measurements, at the scale of a few minutes at a given place, of the radon activity concentration in open and confined atmospheres.

This measurement method is intended for rapid assessment of the radon activity concentration in the air. The result cannot be extrapolated to an annual estimate of the radon activity concentration. This type of measurement is therefore not applicable for assessment of the annual exposure or for determining whether or not to mitigate citizen exposures to radon or radon decay products.

The measurement method described is applicable to air samples with radon activity concentration greater than 50 $Bq \cdot m^{-3}$.

NOTE For example, using an appropriate device, the radon activity concentration can be spot measured in the soil and at the interface of a material with the atmosphere (see also ISO 11665-7[8]).

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 11665-1, *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 11929 (all parts), *Determination of the characteristic limits (decision threshold, detection limit and limits of the confidence interval) for measurements of ionizing radiation — Fundamentals and application*

ISO/IEC Guide 98-3, *Uncertainty of measurement — Part 3: Guide to the expression of uncertainty in measurement (GUM:1995)*

ISO/IEC 17025, *General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories*

IEC 61577-1, *Radiation protection instrumentation — Radon and radon decay product measuring instruments — Part 1: General principles*

3 Terms, definitions and symbols

3.1 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO 11665-1 apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

— ISO Online browsing platform: available at http://www.iso.org/obp

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