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EPA Confirms that Granite Countertops Pose No Significant Health Risk, Undercutting ‘Junk Science’ Fear Mongering, Says Marble Institute of America

CLEVELAND, OH – July 25, 2008 – New U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) statements reaffirm that granite countertops pose no significant health risk, discounting recent alarmist reports about the safety of granite countertops, said the Marble Institute of America, the nation’s leading natural stone association.

The EPA issued its new statements late Friday, following media reports citing junk science and inconsistent testing results that created public concern about granite countertops as a source of radon gas.

“While natural minerals such as granite may occasionally emit radon gas, the levels of radon attributable to such sources are not typically high,” the EPA statement said. “EPA believes the principal source of radon in homes is soil gas that is drawn indoors through a natural suction process.

“Granite is a natural mineral formed by earth’s geology,” the statement continues. “It is mined and used to produce commercial products such as countertops. It is possible for any granite sample to contain varying concentrations of uranium that can produce radon gas. Some granite used in countertops may contribute variably to indoor radon levels. However, EPA has no reliable data to conclude that types of granite used in countertops are significantly increasing indoor radon levels.”

The statements can be found at the EPA website, at http://iaq.custhelp.com/cgi-bin/iaq.cfg/php/enduser/std_adp.php?p_faqid=5103&p_created=1212758208&p_sid=Au1wNF9j&p_accessibility=0&p_redirect=&p_lva=&p_sp=cF9zcmNoPSZwX3NvcnRfYnk9JnBfZ3JpZHNvcnQ9JnBfcm93X2NudD0yMSwyMSZwX3Byb2RzPTM3M-CZwX2NhdHM9JnBfcHY9MS4zNzAmcF9;dj0mcF9zZWfY2hfdHlwZT1hbnN3ZXJzLnNIYXJjaF9ubCZwX3BhZ2U9MQ**&p_li=&p_topview=1

The EPA also issued a new statement on the presence of radiation in granite, which said: “Construction materials such as concrete, cinder blocks, bricks, and granite contain small amounts of radioactive materials that are found naturally in the materials used to make them.”

That statement can be found at the EPA website, at <http://www.epa.gov/radiation/sources/index.html#construction>
Citing recent studies by university scientists and Consumer Reports, Jim Hogan, president of the MIA, said the new EPA statement confirms findings that have consistently shown granite countertops pose no health risk in the home. “Every time researchers have applied rigorous scientific standards to testing, the results have found that granite countertops pose no risk,” Hogan said. “Repeated studies have found that granite is safe. Unfortunately, some recent junk science being reported as fact only serves to panic the public, not inform it. Our goal is to end this fear mongering by facilitating the creation of a real scientific standard for testing granite countertops.”

Two recent studies by researchers at the University of Akron and Consumer Reports found no grounds to fear granite countertops.

Consumer Reports, America’s foremost consumer protection institute, recently conducted its own limited independent tests of granite countertops and found no evidence that granite countertops pose a health risk. In fact, none of the granite countertops tested by Consumer Reports were found to be emitting radon.

According to Consumer Reports, similar findings were recently generated by other well-conducted studies of granite countertops, and those studies found that, of a large number of countertops tested, only a few samples emitted minute levels of radon.

Dr. L.L. Chyi, who conducted the Akron study, said, “Radon in countertops is not an issue.”

To eliminate confusion resulting from junk science or inconsistent testing, the MIA is working with scientists and other experts to establish universal standards for testing granite countertops for radon emissions. The goal is to build a scientific consensus around testing protocols so that all research can be done consistently.

Results of the Akron study are available on MIA’s website, www.marble-institute.com.

About the Marble Institute of America

For over 60 years the Marble Institute of America (MIA) has been the world’s leading information resource and advocate for the natural dimension stone industry. MIA members include marble, granite, limestone, sandstone, and other natural stone producers and quarriers, fabricators, installers, distributors, and contractors around the world.