

The OPINE (Asterhill's Blog)

Winter Series: "Health Risk at Home"

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COMMUNITY HEALTH: *Health Risk at Home*

James Carroll, APA, APHA, IEDC

Senior Community Health Planner

In the United States, almost 60% of all homes were built before 1980 (US Census, 2011). In New York and the Northeast, this rises to 80% or more. In upstate New York including Buffalo, Rochester, and Syracuse this represents over 70% of all homes, whether they are owner occupied or rented (US Census). These older homes often contain many hazards affect health and sources for many medical problems.

In 1997, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission reduced the use of lead from 0.05 to 0.06 percent under the 1971 Lead Paint Poisoning Prevention Act (CPSC, 1977) . Lead has been used in consumer goods and the workplace for thousands of years. It's only in recent times have we learned about the toxic effects. Lead particle injected or inhaled can poison us causing neurological, renal, and cardiovascular and reproduction illnesses.

Older homes can present a number of others hazards. For example, the common house mouse is primary host responsible for carrying an infectious virus known as Lymphocytic Choriomeningitis. The virus is transmitted via fresh fecal material, saliva or nesting materials that are inhaled or absorb through the nose, eye, or open wound (CDC, 2007). Lymphocytic Choriomeningitis (also referred to as LCM) may present as aseptic meningitis, or encephalitis, causing inflammation of the brain, spinal cord, and meninges (CDC).

Radon gases, molds and other carcinogens often are presents in older homes. Many of these dwellings do not meeting current building codes and have inherent fire hazards. Many homeowners have Home Inspectors test their dwelling for these hazards and offer way to mitigate the problems. Many rented homes do not enjoy the benefits of this testing, nor do most certificates of occupancy call for such remediation. Over 44% of the dwellings in New York State are rental units and over 30% in Upstate New York (Census). Seniors and children occupy about 39% of these homes (Census). Who are the most vulnerable segments of our population.

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