
**Measurement of radioactivity in the
environment — Air: Radon-222 —**

**Part 9:
Test methods for exhalation rate of
building materials**

*Mesurage de la radioactivité dans l'environnement — Air: Radon
222 —*

*Partie 9: Méthode de détermination du flux d'exhalation des
matériaux de construction*

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Contents

Page

Foreword	iv
Introduction	v
1 Scope	1
2 Normative references	1
3 Terms, definitions and symbols	1
3.1 Terms and definitions	1
3.2 Symbols	2
4 Principle	4
5 Reagents and equipment	4
5.1 Reagents	4
5.2 Equipment for sample preparation	5
5.3 Equipment for procedure	5
5.4 Test bench	6
6 Building material test sample preparation	7
6.1 General	7
6.2 Number and dimensions	8
6.2.1 General	8
6.2.2 End product	8
6.2.3 Fluid intermediate materials	8
6.3 Conditioning	8
6.3.1 End products	8
6.3.2 Fluid intermediate materials	9
7 Measurement	9
7.1 General	9
7.2 Set up of test bench	9
7.2.1 Choice of volume flow rate	9
7.2.2 Determination of amount of adsorbent material	10
7.2.3 Determination of minimum desorption duration	10
7.2.4 LSC procedure	10
7.3 Measurement procedure	11
8 Expression of results	13
8.1 General	13
8.2 Free exhalation rate	13
8.3 Standard uncertainty	13
8.4 Decision threshold	14
8.5 Detection limit	15
9 Test report	15
Annex A (informative) Method for determination of free radon exhalation rate of mineral-based building materials — Total count determination using gamma-ray spectrometry	16
Annex B (informative) Method for determination of free radon exhalation rate of mineral-based building materials — Determination by nuclide-specific gamma-ray spectrometry	26
Annex C (informative) Performance characteristics	38
Bibliography	39

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 meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the WTO principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see the following URL: [Foreword - Supplementary information](#)

This document was prepared by 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 11665-9:2016), which has been technically revised.

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

<https://standards.iteh.ai/catalog/standards/iso/c37c/7814-b04c-4c6c-ab4b-7056f35d9a54/iso-11665-9-2019>

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. 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.

Radon is today considered to be the main source of human exposure to natural radiation. UNSCEAR[2] 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. 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, 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 (all parts) for water[3].

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·m⁻³ is recommended by the World Health Organization[4]. Wherever this is not possible, this reference level should not exceed 300 Bq·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·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 radon atoms in materials are produced by the disintegration of the radium-226 contained in the mineral grains of the material. Some of these atoms reach the interstitial spaces between the grains: this is the phenomenon of emanation. Some of these atoms produced by emanation reach the material's surface by diffusion and convection: this is the phenomenon of exhalation.

Values of the radon-222 surface exhalation rate observed for building materials vary from not detectable up to 5 mBq·m⁻²·s⁻¹[6][7].

ISO 11665 consists of 12 parts (see [Figure 1](#)).

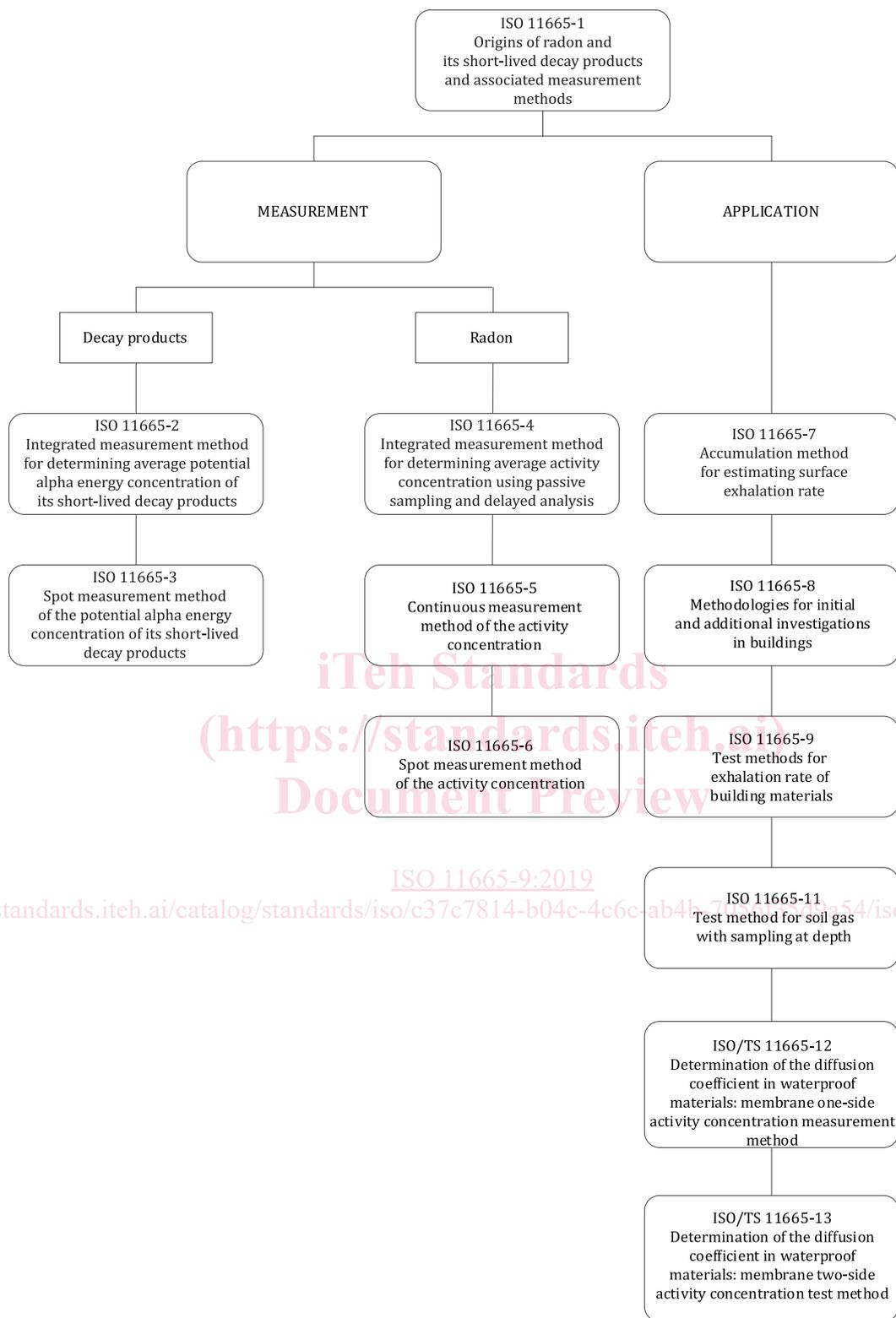


Figure 1 — Structure of the ISO 11665 series