RadTown USA

Radon in Homes and Buildings

Radon is a radioactive gas you can't see, smell or taste, but it may be a problem in your home or school. It's important to:

- **Test** – Testing for radon where you spend time is simple and inexpensive.
- **Fix** – Find a contractor, get cost estimates and fix spaces with an elevated radon level.

About Radon in Homes and Buildings

Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States. More than 21,000 Americans die each year from radon-related lung cancer. Only smoking causes more lung cancer deaths. For more information about indoor air quality and the health risk of radon, visit the Health Risk of Radon page on EPA.gov.

You can't see or smell radon. But it may pose a risk to you in your home or school.

Ways that radon can enter your home

1. Cracks in solid floors
2. Construction joints
3. Cracks in walls
4. Gaps in suspended floors
5. Gaps around service pipes
6. Cavities inside walls
7. The water supply

Did You Know?

Nearly one in 15 homes in the United States has a radon level that should be reduced.

Radon is a radioactive gas. It comes from the natural decay of uranium and radium found in nearly all rocks and soils. Radon moves up from the ground into buildings through openings in floors or walls that are in contact with the ground. Radon can accumulate in buildings over time and may pose a health hazard. Any home or building can have high levels of radon, including new and old homes, well-sealed and drafty homes, and homes with or without basements.

Radon in schools can be a significant source of exposure to the people who spend the most time there, especially students and staff. Qualified professional testing services or trained school personnel can test your school for radon.

Remember

Testing your home is the only way to know if you have elevated radon levels. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Surgeon General recommend that homeowners take action to reduce radon levels that are 4 pCi/L or higher.

Rules and Guidance

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA)

EPA leads the national effort to educate citizens about the risk of radon in homes and buildings. EPA is responsible for conducting research and educating the public about indoor environmental issues, including health risks and how to reduce exposures. EPA educates the public about health risks associated with a variety of indoor environmental pollutants, including radon, secondhand smoke, indoor wood smoke, and other asthma triggers. Please see EPA's Radon Testing webpage[i] for more information on EPA guidance and how to test homes.

THE STATES

Individual states work closely with EPA to educate and encourage people to reduce radon risks. Also, states and EPA work closely with two non-governmental organizations; the National Radon Safety Board (NRSB) and the American Association of Radon Scientists and Technologists (AARST). Together, these national organizations train and certify people who measure and fix houses with elevated radon levels. However, it is up to homeowners to test and get their homes fixed if necessary.

What you can do

Testing for radon at home is easy. There are many kinds of low-cost radon test kits available by phone, online and in many stores. If you prefer, you can hire a professional to do the testing.

Ask your school administrator if your school has been tested. If your school has not been tested recently, qualified professional testing services or school personnel can test your school for radon.

Indoor air quality is an important aspect of a safe learning environment. If a new school is being built or one is being updated, ask your school board to consider making it radon-resistant. See EPA's Radon Publications webpage[ii] for help.

If a radon level of 4 picocuries per liter (pCi/L) or more is detected in your home or school, a qualified radon mitigator should install a mitigation system. Typically these systems use a vent fan to keep radon from entering the building. The certified professional may also recommend adjusting the HVAC system as an alternative method of mitigation.

For more information about radon, its risk and what you can do to protect yourself, visit EPA's Radon webpage[iii].

Where to learn more

You can learn more about radon by visiting the resources available on the following webpage: http://www3.epa.gov/radtown/radon-homes-buildings.html#learn-more.

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[i] http://www2.epa.gov/radon/find-radon-test-kit-or-measurement-and-mitigation-professional
[ii] http://www2.epa.gov/radon/publications-about-radon
[iii] http://www2.epa.gov/radon/