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DEP Encourages Pennsylvanians to Test Homes for Radon

Winter is ideal time to test for this naturally occurring radioactive gas, the second leading cause of lung cancer

Harrisburg, PA – The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) encourages Pennsylvanians to start off the new year by conducting a simple test of their homes for radon, a naturally occurring radioactive gas that is the second leading cause of lung cancer. Winter is a good time to test in the commonwealth because doors and windows are closed, providing more accurate results.

“Because of our geology, nearly every county in the commonwealth has locations of high radon levels, putting Pennsylvanians at risk of exposure,” said DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell. “A radon test is a great way to protect yourself and your family. Fortunately, testing your home for radon is as simple as opening a can, and inexpensive do-it-yourself tests are available at hardware and home stores.”

“Radon is a leading cause of lung cancer in Pennsylvania,” Health Secretary Dr. Rachel Levine said. “Since we know that radon is prevalent in homes across Pennsylvania, it is important to test your home. It is a simple step you can take to protect your family’s health.”

Radon is an odorless, colorless, radioactive gas that occurs from the breakdown of uranium in the ground. It enters homes through cracks in the foundation or other openings. As a result, high levels of radon tend to be found in basements, but the gas can be found anywhere in the home.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has set 4 picocuries of radon per liter (pCi/L) of air as an Action Level. If your radon level is higher than this, EPA, DEP, and the U.S. Surgeon General recommend having a radon mitigation system professionally installed to lower it. Typically consisting of a pipe and exhaust fan, the system will vent radon to the outside.

All radon testers, mitigators, and laboratories in Pennsylvania must be certified by DEP, which provides a public [list of certified radon service providers](#). People can also obtain a hard copy or verify a company’s certification by calling DEP at 800-23RADON (800-237-2366).

[DEP will send free follow-up test kits](#) to Pennsylvanians who’ve tested their homes and have results higher than 100 pCi/L or who’ve installed an active mitigation system in the past year.

Compared with the associated risk of lung cancer, a radon reduction system is very affordable, generally in the price range of other common home improvements.

Having a system installed will also make the future sale of your home easier. If you’re building a new home, DEP recommends installing a passive radon system during construction. There is no reliable way to test the ground in advance for radon, and the cost of installing the radon system during construction is typically much less than installing one after the fact.

For people buying or selling a home, Pennsylvania’s Real Estate Seller Disclosure Act requires sellers to disclose the results of any known radon testing. The DEP website lists [radon testing options for real estate transactions](#).

DEP provides several [downloadable radon publications](#) and is posting radon tips on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) and airing a [public service announcement](#) throughout January, National Radon Action Month.

For more information, please contact the DEP Radon Division via phone at 800-237-2366 or 717-783-3594, or via email at ra-epbrpenvprt@pa.gov.

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