



Radon Measurement

Tips For Testing Your Home

Radon Measurement

Radon is an odorless, colorless, tasteless gas that is produced by naturally decaying uranium and radium. Uranium can be found in the soil and rock throughout the world and as it decays, it forms radioactive by-products which can be inhaled and cause damage to lung tissue. Radon and its by-products emit alpha particles which damages lung tissue and increases risk of lung cancer. There are no immediate symptoms of radon exposure, but the risk of developing lung cancer increases with exposure to higher concentrations of radon.

While radon is common outdoors, it is diluted to very low levels and is not a concern. However, radon that enters an enclosed space, such as a home, can sometimes accumulate to high levels. Radon gas is drawn into homes or buildings through cracks in the foundation or slab and through unsealed pipes, sumps, drains, walls, and other opening such as crawl spaces.

The only way to know if your are being exposed to elevated levels of radon is to test you home This can be done by performing either a short term or long term test. Short-term tests include charcoal canister and charcoal scintillation devices and require 2-90 days for completion. Long- term tests include alpha track devices and require 90 days - 1 year for completion. Short-term test kits can be obtained form the American Lung Association of the Upper Midwest with a \$10 donation by calling 1-800-788-5864. Short term and long-term test kits can also be purchased at most hardware stores or at manufacturer web sites. If you are not comfortable performing a test, local chapters of the American Lung Association or your state radon programs should have a list of professionals that are licensed to measure radon concentrations that you can hire. The USEPA has set and action level of 4.0 pCi/L and recommends that any buildings with initial readings over this level have additional testing and/or radon mitigation services performed so to reduce the level of exposure. For more information on radon mitigation technique see the *Radon Mitigation* tip sheet.

Tips to perform a short term radon measurement:

- Be sure to closely follow manufacturer's instructions
- Close all doors and windows at least 12 hours before testing and keep them closed during the test period. When entering and leaving home keep door ajar for as little time as possible.
- Place the test kit in lowest livable level of the home.
- Put the test kit in a general use area such as a bedroom, family room, or office. (*Do not place in crawlspace, furnace room, closets, cabinets, or drawers.*)
- Do not test in areas of high humidity (i.e. laundry rooms, bathrooms and kitchens) as this may interfere with results.
- Place the test kit away from drafts, direct sunlight, and other sources of heat (fireplaces and furnaces.)

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Tips (cont.):

- If possible, put kit 3-5 feet off the floor and 3-5 feet away from exterior walls.
- Do not test in extreme weather conditions (high wind or heavy rain)
- Minimize operation of bathroom or kitchen exhaust fans or non-essential exhaust appliances during test.
- Once test is complete, return the test kit to the lab for analysis immediately.

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