



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Pennsylvania Residents Urged to Test Homes for Radon

Harrisburg, PA – The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) today urged all Pennsylvanians to test their homes for radon, a deadly radioactive gas that's the leading cause of lung cancer in non-smokers in the United States. DEP also urged residents to take action to reduce radon levels in their homes if they are high.

“Due to our geology, radon is found everywhere in Pennsylvania. For that reason, we urge residents to test their homes to protect themselves and their family’s health,” said DEP Secretary John Quigley. “Winter is the best time to test your home for radon because doors and windows are typically closed and tightly sealed, producing the most accurate results.”

January is Radon Action Month, and a great time to test. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency sets the “action level” for radon at 4 picocuries per liter (pCi/L) of air. Residents with levels at or above that figure should take steps to lower them.

Testing for radon is the only way to know if a home, school, workplace or other structure has elevated concentrations of radon. Test kits can be purchased at most hardware or home improvement stores at an average cost of \$15 to \$25 per test. If you are uncomfortable doing the testing yourself you can hire a state-certified radon tester, or if you are selling your home and want a radon test, it is best to hire a certified tester. The cost of a mitigation system typically ranges around \$1,000.

Pennsylvania law requires all radon service providers, such as radon testers, radon mitigators and radon laboratories to be certified by DEP. The list of Pennsylvania-certified radon service providers is updated monthly and available on DEP’s website. You can also obtain a hard copy of the directory or verify a company’s certification by calling 800-23RADON.

In 2014, the highest radon level ever recorded in the U.S. was found in a home in Lehigh County. The concentration measured was 3,715 pCi/L, more than 900 times EPA’s action level of 4 pCi/L. DEP recommended the owners vacate their home until it could be remediated to safe levels.

“Approximately 20,000 lung cancer deaths per year are attributable to radon exposure so the threat is very real,” said Secretary of Health Dr. Karen Murphy. “Radon exposure combined with smoking is a particularly lethal combination so we encourage everyone to take steps to reduce their risk.”

If you are building a new home, DEP recommends installing a passive radon system during construction. If high radon levels are found when the home is completed, a fan can be readily installed. There are good reasons to install a radon system during construction:

- There is no reliable way to test the ground in advance for radon.
- The average residential radon level in Pennsylvania is 7-8 picocuries per liter.
- The cost of installing the radon system during construction should be less than installing one after the fact.
- Building the radon system internally should keep aesthetics of the home intact. If radon is not addressed during construction, an outside radon system may be required if the radon test comes back greater than 4 picocuries per liter.

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. DEP's website lists radon testing options for real estate transactions

DEP, in cooperation with Commonwealth Media Services, has produced a public service announcement about the importance of radon testing. The PSA is currently airing on Pennsylvania, television and radio stations during January. The PSA is available on DEP's YouTube Channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VYbZGN1xdfg>. For more information about radon testing and radon resistant construction, visit DEP's website at www.dep.pa.gov/radon.