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## **Radon in Your Home? Testing is Easy and Inexpensive.**

Radon, an odorless and colorless radioactive gas, Radon comes from the natural (radioactive) breakdown of uranium in soil, rock and water and gets into the air you breathe. It is harmlessly dispersed in outdoor air, but when trapped inside structures, it can build up, increasing the chance of lung cancer.

Any home may have a radon problem. This means new and old homes, well-sealed and drafty homes, and homes with or without basements. MO Dept. Of Health and Human Services reports 1 in 5 homes in Missouri may have Radon levels high enough to cause lung cancer. In 2010, the Surgeon General reported Radon gas leads to more than 21,000 deaths in the United States a year. It is the second leading cause of lung cancer with cigarette smoking being number one. If you smoke and your home has high radon levels, your risk of lung cancer is especially high.

Radon typically moves up through the ground to the air above and into your home through cracks and other holes in the foundation, basement walls, basement slab, or if a home is a one story home on a concrete slab with cracks. Your home traps radon inside, where it can build up. If ventilation is inadequate, radon gas can build up to dangerous levels.

Radon is impossible to detect in a home without testing. Fortunately, the level of radon exposure in homes can be determined through a simple, inexpensive, and effective test. Testing is easy and only takes a few minutes of your time.

Testing is the only way to determine if you and your family are at risk from radon. There are many kinds of low-cost "do-it-yourself" radon test kits you can get through the mail and in hardware stores and other retail outlets for around \$15. The kit includes instructions, the test, a postage-paid mailer to return the kit to the lab for the test results, and all of the lab fees. Activated charcoal tests take two to three days, and then the packets are sent to the manufacturer for your results. Be sure to follow the manufacturer's directions specifically to ensure accurate results. If you prefer, or if you are buying or selling a home, you can hire a qualified tester to do the testing for you. You should first contact your state radon office about obtaining a list of qualified testers

The amount of radon in the air is measured in "picocuries per liter of air," or "pCi/L." EPA Recommends If your first short-term test result is more than twice EPA's 4 pCi/L action level, you

should take a second short-term test immediately.

Long-term tests remain in your home for more than 90 days. "Alpha track" and "electret" detectors are commonly used for this type of testing. A long-term test will give you a reading that is more likely to tell you your home's year-round average radon level than a short-term test.

If you find high radon levels, fix your home before you decide to sell it. If the radon test is part of a real estate transaction, the result of two short-term tests can be used in deciding whether to mitigate. For more information, see EPA's "[Home Buyer's and Seller's Guide to Radon](#)".

If you have granite counters in your home you may be concerned that some types of granite emit radon gas. EPA Geochemistry studies have shown either unmeasurable or insignificant emissions that are well below the levels requiring EPA-recommended remediation. If testing, Radon detection cans should not be placed directly on granite. An overall reading should be taken of the air in your home; not a reading of a surface.

If your home hasn't been tested for radon in the past two years, EPA and the Surgeon General urge you to take action. By taking simple steps to test your home for radon and fix if necessary, this health hazard can be avoided. Radon levels can be reduced by up to 99 percent with proven methods. That can be as simple as sealing cracks in your foundation and other openings.

For additional information contact Rebecca Blocker, University of Missouri Extension and ask for our free Radon publications. Call 573-756-4539 or stop by the office at 101, First Floor, Courthouse Annex, Farmington, MO. 63640. The EPA's main radon page, [www.epa.gov/radon](http://www.epa.gov/radon) includes links to radon publications and the National radon hotline: 1-800-55RADON (1-800-557-2366).