



Jackson County Health Department

Environmental Health Division

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January is Radon Action Month

Do you know what radon gas can do? Do you know where radon gas comes from? Radon exposure is the second leading cause of lung cancer, next to smoking. In homes where cigarette smoking occurs, the risks are significantly increased. Radon is an odorless, colorless, radioactive gas present in the soil which can leak into homes through cracks or openings in basement walls, ground floors and crawl spaces.

Do you know your number? Don Hayduk, Environmental Health Division Director states “Since radon is odorless and colorless, the only way to know if you have a radon problem is to test your home. Remember, each home is unique. Just because your neighbor has a low level does not mean you will have a low level in your home. Jackson County is considered a Zone 1 County, which means that average radon levels are expected to be above the Environmental Protection Agency’s recommended action level of 4.0 pCi/L (*picoCuries per Liter*). Take action now and test your home.”

Mr. Hayduk continues to state, “To help everyone test their homes for radon, the Environmental Health Division of the Jackson County Health Department will be selling short term test kits at a discounted price during the month of January. The short term kit allows you to test your home for 3-7 days, providing you with your radon level at that specific point in time.”

Short-term test kits are available for the reduced cost of \$5 (normally \$11) at the Jackson County Health Department Environmental Health Office during National Radon Action Month in January. **For more information, please call (517) 788-4433.**

If you would like to do a long term test of at least 3 months and up to a year, these tests can be purchased online from the State of Michigan Healthy Homes Section at <http://cgi.radon.com/sub/mi/> or in local hardware and home improvement stores. The long term kits provide you with an average radon that you are exposed to in your home. This is considered a better test if you plan to stay in your home for many years. **The Jackson County Health Department does NOT stock long term test kits.**

Here are some quick radon facts.

What is radon?

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that is found in soil and rock in all parts of the United States at all different levels. It is formed by the radioactive decay of Uranium, which is a natural process. Radon gas is radioactive, invisible and it has no odor or taste. You need to test to determine your level.

What types of buildings contain radon?

- Radon may be found in all types of homes and buildings in the United States. If there is radon gas in the ground, it can seep into a building.
- Radon typically moves up from the ground into a home through drains, cracks or other holes in the foundation. Radon can then be trapped inside the home and rise to unhealthy concentrations.
- Radon levels can fluctuate over time and from season to season due to weather and home construction design. Winter radon levels tend to be slightly higher than summer levels on average.

How does radon affect health?

Health studies show that radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer, behind cigarette smoking.

- The higher the radon level indoors, the greater the amount of radon gas you breathe. Radon gas is a radioactive element and, like all radioactive elements, decays further into other radioactive particles by releasing energy.

- Damage to your lung tissue can occur if radon gas particles happen to decay and release bursts of energy when they are in your lungs. This damage to lung cells over time can potentially become lung cancer.
- Inhaling indoor air containing radon over a period of many years can increase your risk of getting lung cancer. Your chance of getting lung cancer from radon depends on how much radon is in your home and how much time you spend in your home. If you are a smoker or a former smoker, the risk of getting lung cancer from radon is even greater.

How do you fix a home with a high radon level?

- The primary method to reduce radon in a home is installing a vent pipe system and fan that pulls and collects radon gas from beneath the building and vents it to the outside.
- This system, known as an active soil depressurization system, does not require major changes to a home.
- Radon reduction systems can be installed in homes with or without basements, as well as in homes with crawlspaces.
- The cost of reducing radon in a home depends on how the home was built and the extent of the radon problem. The vast majority of homes can be fixed for about the same cost as other common home repairs.

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