

NEWS RELEASE

Public Health - Madison & Dane County

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Radon can Threaten your Family's Health

Now is a Great Time to Make Sure that your House is Radon Free

Madison WI – January 4, 2016 – Despite the fact that the start of “real” winter weather has been slow; we are entering the season that has us spending more time inside our homes. While a well insulated home does a good job of protecting you from the cold, it also creates the potential risk that a colorless, odorless and tasteless gas may be seeping into and building up in your home. That gas is called radon, and it is a genuine threat to the health of your family. In fact about 46% of the homes tested in Dane County had levels of radon that are considered unsafe according to 2012 data.

Radon occurs because much of the land in Dane County has small amounts of uranium in the soil. When this uranium breaks down, one of its natural byproducts is radon gas. If the land you are living on has a bit more uranium than other places, it is likely that radon gas may move up through cracks and holes in your building's foundation and enter the living area of your home. When you breathe in radon, radioactive particles from radon gas can get trapped in your lungs

This invisible home invader is the second leading cause of lung cancer after cigarette smoking. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Surgeon General's office estimate radon is responsible for more than 20,000 lung cancer deaths each year in the U.S. About 2,900 of these deaths occur among people who have never smoked. If you do smoke and your home has elevated radon levels, your risk of lung cancer goes up **seven times**.

The first thing to be done is establish if radon has gotten into your house. The good news is that there is a simple, inexpensive way to detect the presence. A low cost radon test kit (usually under \$25) can be purchased at any local hardware or home product store. Public Health also has kits available for sale at \$10.00 per kit. (See below for detailed information).

The EPA and the Surgeon General of the United States recommend that the test be done in the lowest lived in level of your home. The kits come with a pre-paid return envelope, and after the recommended amount of monitoring time, all you need to do is to send the kit to the laboratory for analysis. The lab will send you easy to read results within two or three weeks, or even earlier if you provide them with your email address.

If testing shows that you do have a radon problem, you will need to install a system that will prevent the radon from accumulating in your home. Such systems should be

installed by a certified mitigation contractor. According to Clint Marshall, Public Health Radon Specialist, "While the cost of fixing this problem can seem high (typically \$800-\$1,200) it is a real bargain when weighed against the benefits of removing the threat of lung cancer from your home".

This is why PHMDC joins the EPA during National Radon Action Month to remind the public that ignoring this hazard can have terrible consequences, so it pays to take action against this invisible and preventable threat to the health of your family.

For more information regarding radon, including a list of qualified radon remediation contractors, visit the Wisconsin Radon Information Web site at:

www.lowradon.org.

For more detailed background on radon see the following link:

http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/radiation/brochure/profile_radon.htm

To purchase a test kit or to speak with the Public Health Radon Specialist, call the South Central Wisconsin Radon Information Center at (608) 243-0392.

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An online version of this release is available at

<http://www.cityofmadison.com/news/radon-can-threaten-your-familys-health>