

NEWS RELEASE

Public Health - Madison & Dane County

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Don't let Radon Sneak into your House

You can't See it or Smell it, but you can Detect its Presence

Madison WI – January 9, 2015 – If this winter is at all typical, we are probably facing some long cold months before we get any relief. Having warm, cozy, well-insulated home helps us endure. But this comfort can come with some risk, which takes the form of radon gas seeping in through small cracks in basement floors or foundations. Radon is an odorless, invisible, and tasteless gas which occurs naturally in many areas of Wisconsin. It comes from small amounts of uranium found in some soils. When this uranium breaks down it produces radon gas and other byproducts. Living in a warm, well sealed environment can permit radon levels to increase during the winter.

The bottom line on radon is that it is very bad for your health because it can damage your lungs and put you and your family at risk for lung cancer. In fact the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that radon is responsible for about 21,000 lung cancer deaths every 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 **seventimes**. The bad news is that about 54% of the homes tested in Dane County in 2012 had levels of radon that are considered unsafe.

But there is also some good news. There is a simple, inexpensive way to detect the presence of this invisible and harmful home invader. 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 test is the only way you can determine if you have the problem or not.

The EPA and the Surgeon General of the United States recommend that the test be set up 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 address on the label 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, "It will probably cost you between \$800 and \$1,200 to install such a system, which seems like a lot of money. But if you weigh this cost against eliminating the threat of lung cancer, it becomes a much easier investment to make."

This is why Public Health – Madison and Dane County 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](https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/radon/radon-measurements.htm) at <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/radon/radon-measurements.htm>

For more detailed information on radon -

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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