

RADON AND TESTING

“Indoor radon gas is a national health problem. Radon causes thousands of deaths each year. Millions of homes have elevated radon levels. Homes should be tested for radon. When elevated levels are confirmed, the problem should be corrected.” *Surgeon General Health Advisory*

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), no level of radon is safe and any radon exposure carries some risk. Even levels that are below the EPA's Action Level (4 pCi/L) pose some health risk. By lowering the radon level, the risk of lung cancer is reduced.

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) encourages all homeowners, schools, and public and private building owners in Pennsylvania to test for radon. Testing can be done by certified radon testers or by the owner with a radon detection device. To find a certified radon tester, please go to: <http://www.dep.pa.gov/Business/RadiationProtection/RadonDivision/Certification/Pages/ServicesDirectory.aspx>.

For information on radon testing and mitigation during a real estate transaction, please read the Pennsylvania Home Buyers' and Sellers' Guide to Radon at: www.dep.pa.gov/radon then select Publications.



DO-IT-YOURSELF RADON DETECTION DEVICES

Testing the radon level in the home is inexpensive and easy. Test devices may be purchased directly from DEP-certified laboratories by mail order. There is a complete list of DEP-certified radon laboratories, testers, or mitigators on DEP's website or call DEP's radon hotline (see the Additional Information section located on the back of this fact sheet).

Many home improvement and retail stores sell radon detection devices with an average cost of around \$20 to \$30. Most, but not all, laboratories charge one flat price that includes the test device and the laboratory analysis fee. However, some kits are sold at a lower price but with a laboratory analysis fee due later. Please be sure to read the company's packaging for further details.

Periodically, the American Lung Association of Pennsylvania (800-586-4872) and the National Radon Hotline (800-557-2366) distribute radon test kits at a reduced cost.

For more information on radon and how to test for radon, please read the Pennsylvania Resident's Guide to Radon at: www.dep.pa.gov/radon then select Publications.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Are home radon test kits accurate?

Yes. Radon test kits provided by DEP-certified laboratories are held to the same quality standards as those used by DEP-certified radon testers. DEP periodically conducts performance evaluations of each laboratory test kit. It is important to read and follow the directions carefully before unsealing and when using the test kit.

Where should I place my radon test kit?

The radon test should be placed in the lowest lived-in level of the home. However, be aware that should the home be sold, the test is done in the lowest level of the home suitable for occupancy. This means the lowest level being used as living space which is finished or does not require major structural renovations prior to use, which is usually a basement or slab-on-grade. Refer to the PA Home Buyers' & Sellers' Guide to Radon for more information.

Should I use a DEP-certified radon tester instead of purchasing radon test kits?

Hire a DEP-certified radon testing individual or firm when buying or selling a home or if the homeowner is uncomfortable placing and retrieving their own test device. If the homeowner hires a tester, verify that person is DEP-certified. Ask the tester to show their DEP certification ID. If the homeowner is still unsure, call DEP's radon hotline, or go to DEP's website and check that a tester or firm is certified.

I found a radon test kit online; is it a good idea to buy from an online vendor?

Any retailer or website may sell radon test kits, but the laboratory that analyzes the kit must be certified by DEP. Make sure that a DEP-certified radon laboratory will analyze the test kit.

Should I do a short-term test or a long-term test?

DEP recommends that all homeowners first test with a short-term device. Short-term test devices usually take two to four days. A long-term test may be appropriate with short-term test results between four and ten pCi/L. Follow the manufacturer's directions carefully.

Why might I need a long-term radon test?

If the radon level is between 4.0 pCi/L and 10.0 pCi/L, consider performing a long-term radon test (at least 91 days, but preferably one year). Short-term tests are accurate for the time deployed, but the closer the result is to EPA's Action Level of 4 pCi/L, the harder it is to determine if a home's year-round average is above or below the Action Level. A long-term test, if exposed for one year, will provide the home's year-round average radon level. Long-term tests are conducted under normal living conditions and through a variety of seasonal and weather conditions.

How often should I retest?

If the home was mitigated, DEP recommends testing the home once every two years. After initial testing, and if mitigation is not necessary, test the home once every five years. Also, test after renovations or new additions to the home.

Additional Information

For more information, visit www.dep.pa.gov, or contact DEP's radon hotline at 800-237-2366.