

News Release – 2 pages

From the Knox County Health Department

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Now is the time to test for radon; free test kits available

You can't see radon. And you can't smell it or taste it. Yet, it could be a problem if it gets in your home. Now is the best time to find out.

Radon is a radioactive gas that comes from the soil. It gets into your home through cracks or openings in the foundation. If large amounts of radon accumulate in the air in your house for long periods of time, it can cause lung cancer. The ideal time to test for radon is when windows and doors are closed for extended periods of time such as now during the winter months.

The Knox County Health Department offers free radon test kits for individual testing by homeowners, homebuyers, landlords and tenants. In-home testing is the only way to test for radon.

“The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends that all homes be tested for the presence of radon,” said Terri Hillier, a licensed radon tester with the health department. “It is especially recommended that all homes be tested before they are put on the market to be sold and, if necessary, measures be taken to lower radon levels before the homes are sold.”

Several pamphlets including the *How To Protect Your Family from Radon*, *Home Buyer's Seller's Guide to Radon*, and *A Citizen's Guide to Radon* are also available from the health department.

“While radon can pose a serious health threat, it is a problem that can be easily corrected through awareness and proper testing,” said Hillier. “Homeowners can

perform radon testing easily and inexpensively using the kits available from the health department.”

Detailed, but simple instructions accompany each test kit. The actual testing takes from 3-7 days. The test kit is then mailed to a laboratory for processing. There is no charge for the processing and the kit comes in a postage-paid package. Test results are available in 1-2 weeks.

Testing by the Ohio Department of Health has indicated some levels of concern for area residents. Test levels as high as 200 picocuries (pCi) per liter air have been found in Knox County homes. A level of 4 pCi or above is considered unsafe according to the EPA.

“If a reading is greater than 10 pCi in the initial short term test, we recommend a second test to properly evaluate the extent of the problem,” said Hillier. “In most cases the control measures are reasonably inexpensive such as improving air circulation, sealing or cracks in basement floors and walls and venting of sumps.”

Radon can get into any type of building including homes, offices and schools, but you are most likely to get your greatest exposure at home because you spend most of your time there (including the six to eight hours you spend sleeping). Radon usually does not present a health risk outdoors because it is diluted in the open air. However, it can build up to dangerous levels inside a house.

Sometimes the air pressure between the inside of a building and the soil around it also play an important role in radon entry. If the air pressure of a house is greater than the soil beneath it, radon will remain outside. However, if the air pressure of a house is lower than the surrounding soil (which is usually the case), the house will act as a vacuum, sucking the radon gas inside. The most vulnerable areas are basements and first-floor living areas.

To obtain a free radon test kit, stop by the health department located at the corner of Upper Gilchrist and Coshocton roads (across from the radio station). The health department is open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. For more information, contact Terri Hillier at the Knox County Health Department at 392-2200, ext. 2226 or at thillier@knoxhealth.com