

## **General Radon Information**

Radon is an odorless, colorless, radioactive gas that is caused by the natural breakdown (radioactive decay) of materials that contain uranium. Radon can be found in high concentrations in soils and rocks containing uranium, granite, shale, phosphate and pitchblende. You can also find it in soils contaminated with certain types of industrial waste, such as the byproducts from uranium or phosphate mining. Outdoors, radon is diluted to such low levels that there is usually nothing to worry about. Once inside an enclosed space such as a home, however, radon can accumulate, depending upon the building's construction and the concentration of radon in underlying soil.

There is no scientific doubt that Radon gas is a known human lung carcinogen. Prolonged exposure to high levels of Radon gas can cause lung cancer. Millions of homes and buildings contain high levels of radon gas. EPA's efforts are directed at locating the homes with high levels and encouraging remediation of them.

As a means of prevention, EPA and the Office of the Surgeon General recommend that all homes below the third floor be tested for Radon. Because Radon is invisible and odorless, a simple test is the only way to determine if a home has high radon levels. EPA recommends mitigating homes with high Radon levels and there are straight-forward reduction techniques that will work in virtually any home.

Most homes won't have a Radon problem, but there is a simple test to find out if you do or don't have high Radon levels in your home.

With federal funds, the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) has been able to develop and implement an extensive indoor radon program serving the residents of Ohio, utilizing resources at both the state and local government level.

Elevated levels of indoor radon, above the guidelines published by the U.S. EPA, may lead to increased risk of lung cancer.

Additional information about indoor radon, including the potential health risks, sources of indoor radon and radon facts, may be found on the Ohio Radon Information System web site.

Much of the soil in Ohio contains quantities of uranium and radium. These minerals continuously break down to release radon gas. Therefore, Ohio's geology provides an ongoing supply of radon.

In addition, a large percentage of Ohio homes have high levels of radon in the indoor air because of how they are built and how they are operated in our climate. One important factor is that many Ohio homes have basements that are used as living spaces. ODH estimates that about one in two of Ohio homes have enough radon to pose a large risk to the occupants' health over many years of exposure. In some areas of the state, the percentage of homes that have high levels of radon is even larger. Homeowners can reduce this risk, but they must act.

Ohio's soils contain concentrations of uranium and radium that supply a constant source of radon.

Many of our houses are built and operated in ways that increase the likelihood of radon entry in homes. The ODH estimates that almost one in two Ohio homes have radon levels that may pose a large risk to health over many years of exposure. Radon is the leading cause of lung cancer for nonsmokers in the United States.

A licensed radon tester may be used when an unbiased third party is desired. Under Ohio law, only the homeowner may test; any other tester must be an Ohio licensed radon tester. Although tests by licensed testers should be of high quality, they are still subject to the uncertainties related to the timing and duration of the test (see ODH fact sheet, Radon Testing and Use of Test Results, available by calling (800-523-4439)).

You may contact the ODH Radon Program at 800-523-4439 for more information on where to obtain low-cost radon test kits, the types of test kits available, how to test your home properly and how to use the results.