



January is Radon Action Month - test homes for this silent killer

Do you know if the air inside your home is clean, healthy indoor air? Do you know if you and your family may be exposed to radon? If you haven't tested your home for radon, consider adding this to your resolution list, it's a healthy choice that can help reduce your risk of lung cancer.

January is Radon Action Month. South Heartland District Health Department and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommend testing your home for radon, especially in the winter months because more of the cancer-causing gas can become trapped when homes are closed up tight for winter.

What is radon? The American Cancer Society describes radon as "a colorless, odorless, radioactive gas." Radon forms naturally from the decay (breaking down) of radioactive elements, such as uranium, in the ground. Radon gas can be present in closed spaces, like basements. It enters buildings and homes from the soil beneath - through cracks and holes in the foundation. Unless you test for radon in your home, there is no way to know how much radon exists in the air you are breathing.

Is radon present in Nebraska? Yes, based on testing results from residents across much of the South and Eastern regions of our state, radon levels tend to be elevated. In the past year, 44% of radon test results in the SHDHD service area had radon levels above the EPA 'action level' of 4 picocuries per liter.

The highest results reported in 2021 were 25.8 in Adams County, 11.4 in Clay County, 9.7 in Nuckolls County, and 5.9 in Webster County. In previous years, some homes in these four counties have tested much higher, as much 100 picocuries per liter. Any residents whose test results are over 4 picocuries/liter are at risk and should consider taking further steps to assess and reduce radon levels in their homes.

What's the big deal? Exposure to radon gas is the leading cause of lung cancer for people who have never smoked. The EPA estimates that radon causes about 21,000 lung cancer deaths each year in the United States. Cancer caused by radon would usually occur many years (as many as 5-25 years) after exposure.

How do I find out if I have a radon problem in my home? Using a short-term radon test kit is an easy and inexpensive way to obtain initial results. Follow the instructions on the kit to

determine how and where to set up the kit and how many days to leave it in place; short-term kits typically require from 2-7 days for testing.

South Heartland District Health Department is distributing short-term test kits for \$7.00 from our offices at 606 N. Minnesota in Hastings. Kits are also available for purchase at the county extension offices in Clay, Nuckolls and Webster counties and at the Public Library in Superior.

Can I test for radon during a real estate transaction? Testing for radon during the sale of a home is an opportune time to determine if the home you are purchasing has elevated levels of radon. While it is not required for a real estate transaction in Nebraska, this is an ideal time to request testing.

Where can I find more information?

For links to more information on radon, radon testing, local radon test results and radon reduction methods, please visit the South Heartland District Health Department website at www.southheartlandhealth.org or call 1-877-238-7595.

Michele Bever, PhD, MPH, is executive director for South Heartland District Health Department, serving Adams, Clay, Nuckolls and Webster counties in Nebraska. She may be reached at 1-877-238-7595.

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