

Protect Your Family from Radon

By Becky Karush



Radon is a colorless, odorless gas that can seep into any type of building, including your home. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, it's the leading cause of lung cancer among nonsmokers. Fortunately, it's easy to detect radon—and protect your family from it.

Here is important information about dealing with radon.

Why is it harmful? Radioactive particles are released with the natural decay of uranium found in nearly all soil, as well as rock and water. When inhaled, these particles can cause lung cancer. A radon level above 4 picocuries per liter (pCi/L) of air is considered dangerous. About 0.4 pCi/L of radon is typically found outdoors.

How does it get inside buildings? Radon migrates through soil and enters buildings through cracks in the foundation, basement floor, and walls; openings around sump pumps, drains, pipes, and wires; joints in construction materials; and crawl spaces. As radon seeps into your home, it can build up in the enclosed living space, increasing in concentration.

Where can you find a radon test? Low-cost do-it-yourself test kits can be purchased at your local hardware store or online. If you prefer to use a qualified tester, your state radon office can provide you with a list.

How do you fix the problem? If you discover a dangerously high radon level, a qualified contractor can help you find a solution. A mitigation system, which pulls the gas from the house and vents it outside, is an effective solution.

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