

Have You Tested Your Home for Radon?

January is National Radon Action Month

RADON is the second leading cause of lung cancer after cigarette smoking and the first leading cause of lung cancer in never-smokers, according to the Kansas Department of Health and Environment's Radiation Control Program. Radon is an invisible, colorless and odorless gas that occurs naturally in rocks and soil, but in homes radon can concentrate to higher levels than those found outdoors.

Radon levels in soil depend on soil chemistry, which varies from one house to the next. Levels can range from a few hundred to several thousands of picocuries per liter (pCi/l). A pCi/l is a measure of the rate of radioactive decay of radon gas.

KDHE says the average radon level in most Kansas counties is above the Environmental Protection Agency's action limit of 4 pCi/l and the only way to know your level of exposure to radon is to test your home.

"We encourage everyone to test for radon in their home if they have not done so recently, in the past two years," says Kimberly Steves, director, KDHE Radiation Control Program.

KDHE notes that low-cost kits are available from any county extension office across Kansas for under \$10, which includes shipping and lab analysis. Kits are also available at hardware and builder's supply stores.

Any home may have a radon problem from such sources as:

- ▶ Cracks in solid floors and walls
- ▶ Construction joints
- ▶ Dirt floors (crawl spaces)
- ▶ Floor drains
- ▶ Gaps in suspended floors and around service pipes
- ▶ Spaces inside walls
- ▶ Sumps

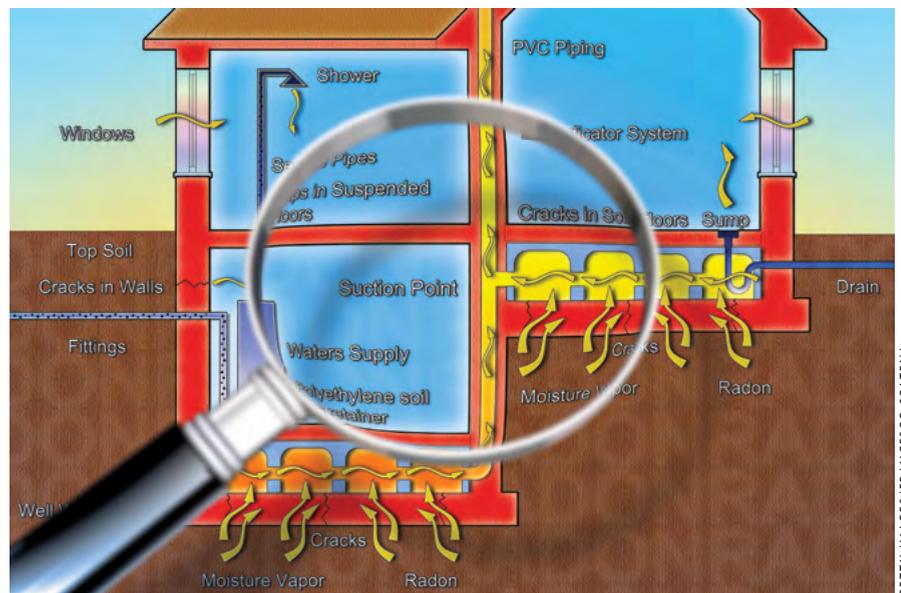
If unsafe levels of radon are found in your home, it can be mitigated.

Radon levels are usually highest in ground floor spaces and basements but can be reduced by preventing its entry, the EPA's preferred method of mitigation. In this case, certified radon measurement and mitigation technicians ventilate the soil under the home so radon is sucked away before it can enter the living space. A fan draws the radon through sealed pipes, releasing it to the outdoor air above the roofline. The KDHE estimates most Kansas homes can be treated for \$800 to \$2,000.

Kansas radon contractors must be certified. KDHE maintains a list of certified radon technicians at www.kdheks.gov/radiation/download/Certified_Contractor_List.pdf.

A variety of additional resources, including fact sheets, maps, and technical information about radon, radon exposure and radon mitigation can be found at kansasradonprogram.org or by calling the radon hotline at 800-693-5343. **KCL**

Information provided by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and its Kansas Radon Program.



Radon can enter a home through several ways. Aided by the normal air pressure differences between the house and the soil that creates a slight vacuum in the home, radon gas is drawn from the soil into the building.