



Radon

Radon is an odorless, tasteless and invisible gas that is released by the decay of uranium, a rock in our soil. When radon is released from the ground, it can seep through cracks in the foundation of a home. Breathing in radon can damage cells in the lungs and can lead to lung cancer. Radon exposure is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States and is responsible for an estimated 21,000 lung cancer deaths each year.

According to the Illinois Emergency Management Agency, almost 36% of the homes in Illinois and nearly 25% of the homes in Cook County that were tested by professionals had radon levels higher than recommended by the US EPA.

How do I know if radon is in my home?

The only way to know if you have radon in your home is to test. You can test your home with a simple and inexpensive kit, which can be purchased at most hardware stores. For the most accurate test results, it is important to follow instructions carefully.

Kits should be placed in any livable room where there is a foundation that has direct contact with soil, for example, basements and rooms above crawl spaces. Kits should also be placed in rooms that are the lowest area suitable for occupancy, such as a family room, bedroom, den, playroom, etc. For special circumstances, such as real estate transactions, it's recommended you hire someone licensed to perform radon testing.

What do I do if I have radon in my home?

The amount of radon in the air is measured by picoCuries per liter of air, or pCi/L. Radon reduction, or mitigation, is recommended when radon levels are higher than the US EPA Radon Action Level of 4.0pCi/L. Long-term exposure to radon at this level greatly increases lung cancer risks.

There are several radon mitigation methods, which should be done by a professional. The most common method involves installing a pipe and fan system, which pulls the radon gas from under the house and vents it to the outdoors.

What is being done about radon?

Many homes today are built to prevent radon from coming in.

The Illinois Radon Awareness Act requires that homeowners tell buyers if the home has unsafe radon levels and must provide the buyer with two publications related to radon.

There is also legislation to protect tenants from radon. The Tenants Radon Protection Act requires landlords to give test reports and information about radon to any new tenants.