

Health Officials Urge Citizens to Test for Radon
Radon gas exposure is the leading cause of lung cancer in non-smokers

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With nearly seven percent of homes in North Carolina having elevated levels of radon and approximately 21,000 deaths each year attributed to radon-related lung cancer, it is the second leading cause of lung cancer deaths in the United States after smoking and the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers.

This month the N.C. Division of Environmental Health's Radiation Protection Section is supporting a nationwide campaign to recognize this month as Radon Action Month and encourage citizens to learn more about exposure to radon gas.

Radon is a naturally-occurring, invisible, odorless and tasteless gas that is dispersed in outdoor air but can reach harmful levels when trapped in buildings.

"It is important to test your home for radon as radon gas poses a serious health risk," said Terry L. Pierce, director of the Division of Environmental Health. "Testing homes for elevated levels of radon is simple and inexpensive, and radon problems can be fixed by qualified contractors. It is the only way to determine if you and your family are being exposed to radon gas."

The state's Radon Program is offering free test kits throughout the month of January to enable North Carolina homeowners to test their homes for elevated levels of radon. Citizens involved in real estate transactions are encouraged to use certified testing professionals to test their homes. To receive a free test kit or find a list of certified professionals, go to the Program's Web site, <http://www.ncradon.org>. (The State Radon Program cannot accept phone requests due to their shortage of staff.)

Although supplies are limited for the free test kits from the N.C. Radon Program, they can be purchased at local hardware and home improvement stores, directly from radon testing companies or through internet test kit distributors for \$25 or less.

For more information about radon, radon testing and mitigation, or to request a free radon test kit, please visit the Program's Web site at <http://www.ncradon.org>. You may also call Dr. Felix Fong, senior environmental radiation specialist, at (919) 571-4141, or Catherine Rosfjord, radon coordinator in Western North Carolina, at (828) 274-1717. For those without Internet access, a limited number of test kits are available by calling Krissie Red, environmental health specialist, at 694-6054.

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