

Radon & Real Estate

North Dakota Department of Health

April 2006

North Dakota's Home Buyer's & Seller's Guide to Radon

What Is Radon?

Radon is a radioactive gas found in soil and rocks. It is formed naturally by the breakdown of radium, a radioactive by-product of decaying uranium. As radon itself decays, it forms radioactive by-products called "progeny" or "daughters" which, if inhaled, can damage lung tissue and cause lung cancer.

Invisible, odorless and tasteless, radon is a health hazard when it accumulates inside homes or other structures. Indoor radon exposures are estimated by several leading scientific organizations to be the second leading cause of lung cancer deaths in the United States.

In North Dakota, 61 percent of all homes tested have been above the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency radon "Action Level" of four picocuries per liter of air.

Sellers

If you have tested your home for radon:

- Provide the test results to the buyer.
- Be sure you have tested correctly.
- Retest if the home was remodeled since the last test.

If you have not tested your home for radon:

- Test the lowest level of your home that can be used as living space (usually the basement), and complete the test before putting the home on the market.
- Conduct the test yourself or hire a NEHA-certified radon testing company.
- If necessary, lower your radon levels.
- Save all information since a low level could be a positive selling point.



Buyers

If the home has been tested for radon:

- Check the following:
 - Are the test results above or below the EPA guidelines?
 - Who conducted the test?
 - Where in the home was the test conducted?
 - What, if any, structural changes have been made since the test?
- Ask for a new test using a National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) Radon Proficiency listed radon testing company.

If the home has not been tested for radon:

- Add provisions to the contract including:
 - Who will conduct the test.
 - What type of test will be used.
 - When the test will be done.
- Decide how the buyer and seller will share the results and the cost of testing.
- Decide who will pay for any actions needed to reduce the radon level.

Recommendations For Testing

How Long?

- Radon testing can range from two days to one year. Radon levels are strongly influenced by weather patterns and occupant activities. Radon does not enter your home at a steady rate.

Can't Wait?

- Make two back-to-back short-term radon tests. Average the results of the two tests to determine the radon levels in your home. Or have an NEHA-certified radon testing company install a continuous radon monitoring device for two to seven days to determine the radon levels in your home.

Where?

- Always test the lowest level of your home that can be used for living space, usually the basement.
- Do not test crawlspaces, mechanical rooms or laundry rooms.
- Do not put the radon testing device on top of a sump hole.

Testing Devices?

- The most common types of monitors used for radon testing are alpha track detectors, charcoal canisters, continuous monitors and electret E-Perms.

Results?

- If the results of a long-term test or the average of two short-term tests are above 4pCi/L, take steps to lower the radon level. The higher the radon level, the greater the risk and the more quickly steps should be taken to reduce the radon concentrations.

For more information about radon and real estate, contact:

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701.328.5188
<http://www.ndhealth.gov/aq/iaq/Radon/index.htm>

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Office of Air and Radiation
Office of Radiation and Indoor Air
402-K-00-008, July 2000
For Internet access for the Home Buyer's and Seller's Guide to Radon booklet go to:
<http://www.epa.gov/iaq/radon/pubs/hmbyguid.html>

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