

NEWS RELEASE

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North Dakota Department of Health Reminds Residents to Test for Radon

BISMARCK, N.D.— During National Radon Action Month in January, the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) reminds residents that January and other cooler weather months are a great time to test their home for radon, a leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers.

“Radon is a cancer-causing, naturally-occurring radioactive gas that you can’t see, smell or taste, and it is found throughout the soil in North Dakota,” said Justin Otto, Indoor Air Quality and Radon Program Coordinator for NDDoH. “Its presence in the home can pose a danger to a family’s health.”

Radon is harmlessly dispersed in outdoor air at low levels, but when trapped in buildings, it can be harmful, especially at elevated levels. “The good news is that radon is a problem that can be managed,” said Otto. “By installing a radon mitigation system, homeowners can effectively lower the level of radon in their homes. These systems use many common building materials and require few specialized tools to install.”

Systems may be installed by a homeowner or a radon mitigation contractor. A list of contractors is available on the North Dakota Department of Health, Division of Air Quality’s website at <http://www.ndhealth.gov/AQ/IAQ/RADON/>. Once in place, a properly installed mitigation system will reduce radon gas and safely vent it outside.

Radon-related illness claims more than 21,000 lives in the United States annually. “In North Dakota, 63 percent of homes have an elevated level of radon above the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) ‘Action Level’ of 4.0 picocuries per liter (pCi/L),” said Otto. “In fact, the EPA lists North Dakota as Zone 1, meaning the entire state has the highest potential for elevated radon levels.”

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The EPA has launched a new series of television, radio and print public service announcements encouraging people to test their homes for radon and remedy any problems. During January, events nationwide will focus on testing and fixing problems in homes with a radon level of 4.0 pCi/L or higher.

Radon test kits are available by emailing Justin Otto at jotto@nd.gov and including a mailing address. The radon test kits are available at no cost to the general public and they include all mailing and laboratory-analysis fees. The test kits are very easy to use and come with easy-to-follow directions, says Otto. Test kits also may be available for purchase at local hardware stores, building supply stores or local public health units.

For more information about radon, visit www.ndhealth.gov/aq/iaq/Radon, or call contact Justin Otto, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.5188.

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