

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jan. 15, 2014

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DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION URGES TESTING OF HOMES AND SCHOOLS DURING NATIONAL RADON ACTION MONTH

(14/P4) TRENTON - The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is urging homeowners and school officials as part of National Radon Action Month to test for radon, a naturally occurring gas that is linked to cancer.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency designates each January as National Radon Action Month to draw attention to health risks posed by radon. The DEP is urging all homeowners and schools in New Jersey to check for the presence of radon by using simple tests that are available through radon testing contractors, some local health departments, mail order, home improvement centers, and hardware stores.

"This is the smart thing to do," said DEP Commissioner Bob Martin. "This simple and inexpensive test can ensure the safety and health of you and your families, as well as our students. In most cases, there are simple steps you can take to eliminate radon if it is detected."

The northwestern part of the state, particularly Sussex, Warren, Morris, Somerset and Hunterdon counties, has the largest number of homes with elevated radon concentrations and sections of Mercer and Monmouth counties also have high radon levels. However, everyone should test for radon because pockets of high radon concentrations can be found in other parts of the state too.

The DEP and the EPA recommend that action be taken to mitigate if test results indicate radon levels of 4 picocuries per liter (4 pCi/L) of radon or higher. Mitigation usually entails installation of a venting system that draws the gas out of the home.

Colorless, odorless and tasteless, radon is a radioactive gas that results from the breakdown of naturally occurring uranium in soil and rock. Low levels of uranium occur widely in the Earth's crust, and can be found in all 50 states.

The EPA estimates radon causes 21,000 deaths annually. The Surgeon General has warned that radon is the number one cause of lung cancer in non-smokers, and second leading cause of lung cancer after cigarette smoking.

Radon enters buildings through openings that are in contact with the ground, such as cracks in the foundation, sump pits, and small openings around pipes. Radon decays into radioactive particles that can get trapped in your lungs when you breathe, which could damage lung tissue. Long term exposure can lead to lung cancer.

Residents can test for radon themselves or hire a New Jersey certified radon measurement business to perform the testing. Check with your local health department to find out if they provide either free or low-cost radon test devices.

Radon self-test kits can be purchased from \$15 to \$50. Contractors generally charge between \$50 and

\$200.

Schools must obtain testing devices from a certified business or work with a certified contractor.

Homeowners who purchase kits at retail stores should make sure the kit is labeled with the New Jersey certification number of the company that produced the test kit (the number will begin with "MEB9" followed by 4 digits). If you hire a contractor to conduct the test, make sure the technician who places and picks up the test device is certified by the state.

Lists of New Jersey certified testing and mitigation businesses and general radon information are available at [www.njradon.org](http://www.njradon.org) or call the Radon Section Information Line at (800) 648-0394 or (609) 984-5425.

To access the New Jersey Radon Potential Map, which shows radon risks for each municipality in the state, go to: [www.njradon.org/radonin.htm](http://www.njradon.org/radonin.htm)

This message has been sent by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection