



## Radon, the Silent Intruder

**Radon gas has achieved a level of notoriety within the real estate industry. But what is radon? Where does it come from? What possible health effects can radon have on the members of my family? And what can I do if my home has elevated levels of radon gas? These are legitimate questions, and the answers, fortunately, are readily available.**

**Radon is a colorless, odorless, and tasteless gas, which is generated as a by-product of the decay of uranium in the earth's crust. Radon is the only element in the decay chain of uranium that takes a gaseous form, so it is therefore able to diffuse through soil and through cracks in the floor or walls of a building foundation. Once radon has entered a structure, it will break down in a relatively short time, since it has a half-life of approximately 3-1/2 days. The breakdown of the radon gas creates, radon daughter particles, which are radioactive solids that can attach to dust particles and be inhaled into the lungs of the inhabitants. These radon daughters can adhere to lung tissue and create the serious health risk associated with radon exposure.**

**The Surgeon General of the United States has issued a warning that radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control, the American Lung Association, and the American Medical Association, all agree that radon exposure causes thousands of preventable lung cancer deaths each year. Your individual risk of contracting lung cancer is greatly increased if you are a smoker, and you live a home with elevated levels of radon gas.**

**The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has established a concentration of 4 Pico-curies per liter (pCu/L) as the action level for recommended mitigation of radon gas. Most homes with elevated concentrations of radon can be successfully mitigated to a level of 2 pCu/L or less. The average concentration within a home in the United States is 1.3 pCu/L, and the average outdoor concentration is 0.4 pCu/L**

**It is possible for you to test your home for radon yourself. If you choose to do so, carefully follow all of the EPA recommended protocols so that a valid test result will be achieved. Professional radon testing is also available, but check with your state radon office to determine the licensing regulations in your area. The EPA has certified several different measuring systems for short term, 48-72 hour testing.**

**Any of the EPA certified test, when administered using the approved protocols for testing and analysis, will yield valid results.**

**If your test reveals a concentration greater than 4 pCu/L, Certified radon mitigation service providers can also be located through your state radon office. EPA publications state that mitigation systems can cost from \$800.00-\$2,500.00, and are effective in lowering radon concentrations to acceptable levels.**

**Whether you are purchasing a home, selling one, or have no intention of moving, it makes sense to know the radon level within your home. Through education, testing, and mitigation, the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States, can be eliminated.**

For more information contact:

the EPA website at; <http://www.epa.gov/iaq/radon/index.html>

West Virginia Radon Office; (800) 922-1255

Maryland Radon Office; (800) 438-2472 (x2086)