

January is radon action month

BISMARCK, N.D. – During National Radon Action Month in January, the North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality (NDDEQ) reminds residents that cold weather months are a great time to test their homes 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, that is found throughout the soil in North Dakota,” said Justin Otto, Indoor Air Quality and Radon Program Coordinator for the NDDEQ. “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 it can be harmful when trapped in buildings, especially at high concentrations. “The good news is that high radon levels 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 conventional 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 NDDEQ website at <https://deq.nd.gov/publications/WM/Radon/RadonContractors.pdf>. Once in place, a properly installed mitigation system will reduce radon gas and safely vent it outdoors.

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, the highest potential for elevated radon levels.” The EPA and the NDDEQ are 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 very easy to use and come with easy-to-follow directions,” says Otto. The NDDEQ is giving away 500 free radon test kits to North Dakota residents. Visit <https://deq.nd.gov/wm/radon/> to receive a free radon test kit in the mail while supplies last. Radon test kits are available for purchase at most local hardware stores, building supply stores or online.

The NDDEQ also focuses on testing radon in schools. School testing is more complex than testing a single-family home and requires more resources. “It’s not uncommon to use over 200 radon test kits on a larger school building,” says Otto. “Every classroom, office, staff room, gymnasium and other rooms that are occupied by staff and students are tested for radon.” Radon testing in schools would not be possible without help from the North Dakota Comprehensive Cancer Control Program, which aids in providing resources for testing schools. The NDDEQ tested 30 schools in 2019 and another 26 schools for radon in 2020. Administrators interested in having their school tested should visit <https://deq.nd.gov/wm/radon/> or call contact Justin Otto at 701-328-5166.

For more information contact:

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