

RADON GUIDANCE FOR THE HOME BUYER

Radon is a cancer-causing, radioactive gas that comes from the natural breakdown of uranium in soil, rock, and water. Breathing air containing radon increases the risk of lung cancer. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States.

Radon enters buildings through cracks and other openings in the foundation. Nearly one out of every 15 homes in the United States is estimated to have an elevated radon level. Testing is the only way to know the radon level in a home.

Radon problems can be fixed. EPA recommends that homes be mitigated for radon if the radon level is 4.0 picocuries per liter (pCi/L) or higher. Even very high levels can be successfully reduced.

Test for Radon. If you are buying an existing home that has already been tested for radon, you may either accept the seller's result or ask for a new test by a qualified tester. Nationally-certified radon professionals can be found through the National Radon Proficiency Program (www.nrpp.info) or the National Radon Safety Board (www.nrsb.org). If the home has a radon-reduction system, ask the seller about it. Make sure the vent fan is operating properly. If not, ask for it to be repaired and then test.

Before accepting a seller's radon test, determine when and where the test was done and who conducted it. The lowest level of the home that you are going to use as living space should be tested. Ask whether structural changes or changes in the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system have been made since the test was done, as this can affect radon levels.

Radon testing guidelines can be found in EPA's *Home Buyers and Sellers Guide to Radon* and the *ANSI/AARSTI MAH-2019* testing protocol for the measurement of radon in homes. Both can be accessed from the SC Radon Program website, des.sc.gov/radon.

If a radon test is needed, consider specifying when and where it will be done and who will conduct it. Other considerations include how the costs will be shared, at what level radon mitigation measures would be taken, and who would pay for them.

Fix a Radon Problem. If elevated levels are found during a sale, the buyer and seller should discuss the timing and costs of radon reduction. Obtain an estimate and references from one or more qualified radon mitigation professionals. Re-test after installation to be sure that radon levels have been reduced. A home with an active mitigation system should be tested every other year.

Note that a potential conflict of interest exists if the same person or firm performs the testing and installs the mitigation system.

If building a new home, consider incorporating radon-resistant features. Test the home upon occupancy, and have a qualified mitigator add a vent fan if the radon level has not been sufficiently reduced.

For more information and resources visit the South Carolina Radon Program website at des.sc.gov/radon. Contact the program at radon@des.sc.gov or 1-800-768-0362.

Source: Home Buyer's and Seller's Guide to Radon, EPA