

Keep your home safe by testing for radon

Written by Staff Reports

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DOH marks Radon Awareness Month

SANTA FE – January marks Radon Awareness Month. To mark the occasion, the New Mexico Department of Health issued a release to the public about the ways and benefits of testing your home for radon, a radioactive gas that increases the risk for lung cancer.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that radon alone is the cause of 2,000 cancer deaths in the U.S. annually. It is the number one cause of lung cancer among people who do not smoke or vape and is the second leading cause of lung cancer among nicotine users. You cannot see, taste or smell it - so the only way to know if you have radon is to test.

Test kits are available through the New Mexico Environment Department. Their Indoor Radon Outreach Program offers free radon test kits while supplies last by emailing them at freeradon.testkit@env.nm.gov. You can also contact the EPA to buy a radon test kit at 1-800-SOS-RADON (1-800-767-7236).

Keep in mind that radon concentrations tend to vary from day to day as well as season to season so a test should be repeated for accuracy.

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People spend an estimated 90% of their time indoors and if your home has radon gas, this is a health concern. Radon typically enters homes from below their foundation, rising through the soil and entering through the floors and walls and becoming trapped inside a home. The best way to reduce your risk for radon-associated lung cancer is to:

Test and retest your home for radon at different times of the year.

Don't allow cigarette smoking or nicotine vaping indoors if your home has high levels of radon. The combination significantly increases the risk of lung cancer from radon.

Install a proper ventilation system to pull the radon gas from your home to the outdoors if your home has high levels of radon.

Radon should be reduced in your home when a test result is at or above 4 picocuries per liter (the term for measure of radon gas in the air). The process of adding a proper ventilation system will not require major changes to a home. For more information, visit the DOH Environmental Public Health Tracking Program's radon page and www.epa.gov/radon.

Regardless of the radon levels in your house, if you smoke or vape, try to quit. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, people who smoke cigarettes are 15 to 30 times more likely to get lung cancer or die from lung cancer than people who do not smoke.

New Mexicans can call 1-800-QUIT NOW (1-800-784-8669) or text READY to 34191 for English or call 1-855-DEJELO YA (1-855-335-3569) or text LISTO to 34191 for Spanish to receive free coaching, nicotine patches or gum for registered participants. In addition, unlimited sessions with a trained Quit Coach are available via text and phone support.

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