

# Winter Heating Season Is a Good Time for Radon Testing

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RALEIGH — As families button up their homes to guard against winter's chill it is an ideal time to make plans to test for radon, the odorless, colorless gas that is our nation's second leading cause of lung cancer. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), radon causes more than 21,000 deaths each year, making it the second most common cause of lung cancer deaths in the United States and the number one cause among non-smokers.

Because testing is the only way to know if your family is at risk from radon, Governor Roy Cooper has proclaimed January as [Radon Action Month](#) in North Carolina, and beginning next week, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services is making 3,600 residential radon testing kits available at no charge. The test kits will be available from local health departments and county extension offices in [32 counties](#) with outreach efforts. Funds for the test kits were provided last fall through a grant from the EPA.

"Radon is a naturally occurring, radioactive gas found in soil and rock that can seep through cracks in the foundations, walls and joints of homes," said NC Radiation Protection Section Chief Lee Cox. "About 7 percent of North Carolina homes have unsafe levels of radon, based on data we've collected. That is why we urge testing of homes."

Radon gas can accumulate and reach harmful levels when trapped in homes and buildings, as may occur during the home heating season, when warm air rises in homes, pulling air from the lower parts of the home where radon may enter. Elevated levels of indoor radon are a preventable and fixable problem with costs of mitigation to reduce the radon to safe levels ranging from \$800 to approximately \$2,500.

The [NC Radon Program's website](#) offers links to certified professionals who can assist in testing or fixing radon issues in homes. Through mitigation, the naturally occurring radioactive gas is released harmlessly from under the home into outdoor air.

For those who are not in the counties where free test kits are available, homes still should be tested. The NC Radon Program web page has links to several retailers that sell kits, and they are also available in many hardware stores. Retail prices average below \$20 per kit. The website also lists [resources](#) and a link to an instructive video, and provides information on its web page for families who may qualify for financial assistance to meet mitigation expenses.

For more information visit the NCDHHS' radon website at [ncradon.org](http://ncradon.org).