

# Radon in Lane County?

We don't hear about radon very much in Lane County, but according to test results published by Air check INC. 1 in 10 homes in Lane County have a radon level of 4 pCi/L (pico curie) or higher. The level at which the EPA suggest action be taken to lower a home radon level. According to National Radon Defense, living in a home for a year with a radon level of 4pCi/L is equivalent to having 100 chest x-rays. (most hospitals only allow people to have 4 chest x-rays per year).

## **So what is Radon?**

Radon is a naturally occurring cancer causing radioactive gas that is colorless, odorless, and tasteless. It is formed by the natural breakdown of uranium in rock, soil and water. Radon gas moves up through the soil and can be drawn into our homes by slight pressure differences. Once inside, radon can become trapped and build up to unsafe levels. The U.S. Surgeon General warns that radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer after cigarette smoking and the number one cause of lung cancer in non-smokers with about 21,000 lung cancer deaths per year, according to EPA's 2003 Assessment of Risks from Radon in Homes (EPA 402-R-03-003).

## **How do you know if your home has high levels of radon?**

Testing is the only way to know your home's radon levels. There are no immediate symptoms that will alert you to the presence of radon. It typically takes years of exposure before any problems surface. There are many kinds of "do-it-yourself" radon test kits you can get through the mail and in some hardware stores and other retail outlets. If you prefer, or if you are buying or selling a home, you can hire a qualified tester to do the testing for you.

## **What if you find high levels of radon in your home?**

There are several proven mitigation methods to reduce radon in your home, but the one primarily used is a vent pipe system and fan, which pulls radon from beneath the house and vents it to the outside. This system, known as a soil suction radon reduction system, does not require major changes to your home. Sealing foundation cracks and other openings makes this kind of system more effective and cost-efficient. Similar systems can also be installed in houses with crawl spaces. Radon contractors can use other methods that may also work in your home. The right system depends on the design of your home and other factors.

More and more, Lane County home buyers and renters are asking about radon levels before they buy or rent a home. Because real estate sales happen quickly, there is often little time to deal with radon and other issues. The best thing to do is to test for radon now and save the results in case a buyer or renter is interested in them and fix a problem if it exists so it won't complicate your home sale later.

For more information about radon, visit the EPA's website: [www.epa.gov/radon/](http://www.epa.gov/radon/)

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