



NEWS RELEASE
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Take action against Radon this month

(Lawrence, KS) – Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S. And five dollars is all it takes to know if you and your loved ones are being exposed to radon – a tasteless, odorless and colorless gas.

The public is urged to pick up a kit this month as part of National Radon Action Month. Kits are available throughout the year at the Douglas County K-State Research and Extension Office for \$5.

Radon, caused by decaying uranium, is found in the earth's rock and soil and can enter a building through cracks and other openings in the foundation. Residents or workers who spend a lot of time in a basement family room, bedroom or office are at the highest risk for radon exposure.

"Most basements have minor cracks in the concrete or the floor that radon gas can permeate," said Richard Ziesenis, Director of Environmental Health at the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department. "Testing is the only way to know if radon is a problem in your home."

When contacted about radon, Health Department staff provide information and in most cases, refers the public to the Extension Office to obtain a test kit. The \$5 fee includes the kit, instructions, a postage-paid envelope and lab analysis, said Trudy Rice, Douglas County Extension Director.

"Radon testing is very popular on the coasts, but not in Kansas," Rice said. "I would say there is a relatively low awareness of radon in Douglas County."

The kits are available as part of a research project conducted by K-State. Significant radon readings (4 Picocuries or more) are reported by zip code to the university, which uses the data to gain a better understanding of radon hot spots throughout Kansas, Rice said.

The 2006 Radon Database for Douglas County and other radon information can be found online at: <http://radon.oznet.ksu.edu>. Click on the Kansas map for a list of counties.

Present indicators show that one out of four homes in Kansas may have elevated radon levels, according to the Kansas Radon Program at K-State's Engineering Extension. In some counties, this number may be higher, but the only way to know is to test.

Nationally, radon contributes to 21,000 deaths from lung cancer a year. As the concentration and length of exposure to radon increases, the risk of developing lung cancer from radon increases. Smokers are also at a higher risk of developing health problems related to radon.

If a high level of radon is found your home, a variety of methods – from sealing floor and wall cracks to redirecting the flow of air into and out of the building – can be used to correct the problem.

For more information on radon, radon testing and what to do if high levels are found in your home, contact the Douglas County K-State Research and Extension Office at (785) 843-7058 or the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department at (785) 843-3060.

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