

K-State Research & Extension News for January 23, 2019

January is National Radon Action Month

Submitted by Kathy Goul, Family & Consumer Science Agent

January is National Radon Action Month sponsored by the Environmental Protection Agency. This is the perfect time of year to test your home for this odorless, colorless and tasteless gas that causes nearly one hundred times more deaths each year than carbon monoxide poisoning.

Radon exposure is the leading cause of lung cancer for non-smokers. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment estimates that residential radon exposure in Kansas causes around 200 new cases of lung cancer annually. A 15-year exposure to radon doubles a person's risk of developing lung cancer.

Radon gas exposure is a problem many residents might not realize they have. The invisible, radioactive gas seeps into homes undetected through foundation cracks and can reach harmful levels if trapped indoors. Radon gas drifts into a building as a natural byproduct of uranium depletion in rocks and soil. According to the EPA, radon is detected in an average of one in four Kansas homes.

The Kansas Radon Program data base shows that 2017 radon levels in Miami, Linn and surrounding counties are above the maximum average recommended indoor radon concentration of 4 pCi/L. This is the level at which the EPA recommends taking action. Many homeowners have done a good job of testing their homes over the last five years, but more homes still need to be tested. The test is one of the simplest ways to detect radon in the home. Test results will tell whether a home is at or above the EPA's recommended reduction level for radon. The average reported test result for Miami County for 2017 was 6.1 pCi/. In Linn County, the average reported test result for 2017 was 9.8 pCi/L.

The radon threat is preventable with some simple steps. In existing homes, a high level might be lowered simply with a straight-forward radon venting system installed by a contractor. In new homes, builders can easily and economically include radon-resistant features during construction.

Kansas currently has two statutes related to radon in effect statewide. The first was effective July 1, 2009 and requires the insertion of a specific paragraph related to radon in all statewide residential real estate contracts that "strongly suggests that home buyers have homes they are considering purchasing tested for radon gas as part of their home inspection process." The second statute was effective July 1, 2011 and requires all individuals or companies in Kansas that provide professional radon services be certified by KDHE. A list of Kansas certified contractors can be found at www.kansasradonprogram.org. Homeowners are allowed to test their own property and mitigate their own homes if desired.

You can determine the level of radon in your home through a simple test using a charcoal radon sampler. The sampler is exposed in your home for 48 hours and then mailed to a lab. Test kits are available for purchase at the Marais des Cygnes Extension District offices. The cost of the kit is \$7.00. Instructions are included with the kit and results from the lab are usually made available in 3-5 days after the receipt of your test kit. These results can be emailed to you, or sent in the mail. Homeowners are encouraged to test their homes every two years.

For more information about radon and testing your home, visit our website at www.maraisdescygn.es.k-state.edu. Look for the link in our Hot Topics section. To purchase your radon test kit, visit our Paola office (104 S. Brayman, Paola) or our Mound City office (115

S. 6th Street). If you need further information about this program, contact Kathy Goul at 913-294-4306 or by email at kgoul@ksu.edu.