

K-State Research and Extension News for January, 2022

Radon: Can Your Home Pass the Test?

Submitted by Kathy Goul, Family & Consumer Science Agent

As a resident of Kansas we have heard this phrase all too often – “There’s no place like home”. After a long day of work, play, running errands and completing chores, many of us are glad to enjoy the comfort of home and the opportunity to relax and unwind. We want our home to be a safe place to live. We secure doors and windows. We install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. But do we test our homes for radon?

Radon is a colorless, odorless and tasteless gas that leaks into homes. As radioactive particles in the soil beneath your home breakdown, they emit a gas also known as radon. Radon seeps into your home through cracks and crevices in your foundation. Breathing in radon gas can cause lung cancer. In fact, radon is the number one cause of lung cancer in non-smokers. When there are high levels of radon present in your home, you are at a higher risk of developing cancer.

Radon levels in your home below 4.0 pCi/L are considered safe. However, elevated radon levels are found throughout Kansas. The EPA estimates that one in every 15 homes nationwide has an elevated radon level at or above 4.0 picoCuries per liter (pCi/L). In Kansas that number is much higher. According to the Kansas Radon Program, approximately one in four Kansas homes may have elevated radon levels.

Data collected by the Kansas Radon Program shows radon levels in Miami, Linn and surrounding counties to be above the maximum average recommended indoor radon concentration. The average reported test result for Miami County in 2019 was 5.8 pCi/L. In Linn County, the average reported test result in 2019 was 7.9 pCi/L.

Radon levels cannot be predicted and often vary locally from house to house. While some geographical areas of Kansas tend to have radon levels below the EPA action level, every home in Kansas has potential for elevated radon.

Many homeowners have done a good job of testing their homes, but more homes still need to be tested. Testing your home for radon can be easy. A do-it-yourself radon test kit can be used to check the levels of radon in your home. The kit is opened and left in the lowest livable part of the home for a couple of days. Once the test is completed, the kit is packaged up in the self-addressed stamped envelope which is part of the kit and then returned by mail for testing. Test results are usually ready in 7-10 days. If results show high levels of radon, addressing the issue is relatively inexpensive and should be done sooner rather than later. Mitigation systems range from \$500 for a do-it-yourself system to \$2,000+ for a professional to install your system.

Each home is unique, the only way to know if your home has radon is through testing. Do-it-yourself radon test kits are available at our K-State Research & Extension offices in Mound City (115 S. 6th Street) and Paola (913 N. Pearl Street, Suite 1). Test kits are \$8.00 and can be purchased between the hours of 8:00 am – 4:30 pm Monday thru Friday.

If you are not comfortable completing a do-it-yourself kit, consider hiring a professional to come and test the radon levels in your home. To locate a professional near you, visit the Kansas Radon Program website at: kansasradonprogram.org.

January is National Radon Awareness Month. Invest in the safety of your family by purchasing a kit or hiring a professional to test the level of radon in your home. For more information about radon and options available for testing and mitigation, visit our website at maraisdescygn.es.k-state.edu or contact Kathy Goul at 913-294-4306 or write to kgoul@ksu.edu.