

Dispelling Some Common Radon Myths

“I don’t have a basement, so I probably don’t have a radon problem.”

Radon can seep in from soil anywhere around or under a home, regardless of whether your home has a basement, crawl space, or is built slab-on-grade. The U.S. EPA and Surgeon General recommend radon testing for all types of homes. In multi-level homes testing should be done on a level below the third floor.

“I don’t live in an area designated as a high radon zone, so my home won’t have a problem.”

The U.S. EPA and the U.S. Geologic Survey conducted surveys of radon potential across the United States. They broke the country down into three zones according to their potential for high indoor radon levels, with Zone 1 having the highest radon potential. It is true that homes in Zones 1 and 2 have a statistically higher chance of having elevated levels of radon. However, the fact is that elevated levels of radon have been found in homes in all fifty states. The radon level in your home depends on the geology under and near your home. The only way to know for sure, and to protect your family from radon, is to test your home.

“Two of my neighbors have tested their homes for radon and they don’t have high levels, so I probably don’t either.”

Radon levels can vary considerably from house to house, even on the same street. It is nearly impossible to predict the exact nature of geologic soil deposits and the extent to which soil gasses will seep into and be retained by a specific house. The only way to know whether radon exists in elevated levels in your home, and to protect your family from radon, is to test.

“There doesn’t seem to be much proof that radon is a serious health problem.”

The science on radon has been formidable over the years, but never before have we had such overwhelming scientific consensus that exposure to elevated levels of radon causes lung cancer in humans. In February of 1998, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) presented the findings of their Biological Effects of Ionizing Radiation (BEIR) VI Report: “The Health Effects of Exposure to Indoor Radon”. This new report by the NAS is the most definitive accumulation of scientific data on indoor radon. The report confirms that radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S. and that it is a serious public health problem. The study fully supports U.S. EPA estimates stating that radon causes between 15,000 and 22,000 lung cancer deaths per year.

“I don’t have time to test for radon!”

Testing is as simple as opening a package, placing a radon detector in your home in a designated area, and, after the prescribed number of days (typically 2), sealing the detector back in the package and mailing it to the lab. The whole process only takes a few minutes of your time.