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January is National Radon Action Month

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has designated January, 2016 as National Radon Action Month. The purpose of the designation is to remind everyone of the serious danger that radon gas poses to us in our homes. According to Terry Eimen, Director of Environmental Health for the Iroquois County Public Health Department, it is estimated that radon causes about 21,000 deaths from lung cancer annually in the United States. About 2,900 of these deaths occur among people who have never smoked. 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.

Eimen describes radon as a natural radioactive gas that is released in rock, soil, and water from the natural decay of uranium. "One of the problems with radon is that it is colorless, odorless, and tasteless," said Eimen. "The only way to tell if you have radon gas in your home is to test for it with a test kit," he said. Eimen said it is imperative for the public to know that even new homes should be tested and that free test kits are available, while supplies last, at the health department.

"It is not a difficult test to conduct," Eimen stated. "Basically, you have to open the test kit, put in the filter and hang it in the lowest level of your living space for about three days and then you just pull out the filter, seal it up and mail it in. Even the postage is paid. Results to the test will be sent to the user either by mail, e-mail or both," he said.

For more information regarding radon, individuals may call the health department or visit the US EPA's website to promote National Radon Action Month:
<http://www.epa.gov/radon/nram/index.html> or the Illinois Department of Public Health's website at: www.idph.gov.