



Date: December 26, 2017

FOR RELEASE THE WEEK OF:
January 1, 2018

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January is National Radon Action Month

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has designated January, 2018 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 about 1 in 15 homes has a high radon levels. The recommended action level to fix your home is 4 Picocurie per liter (pCi/L). If your test results are at 2 pCi/L you should consider fixing your home.

So what is the risk of having radon in your home?

At level 4pCi/L, the radon you inhale is the same as:

- *Smoking 8 cigarettes per day*
- *Having 200 chest X-rays per year*

Your risk at 2pCi/L is the same as:

- *Smoking 4 cigarettes per day*
- *Having 100 chest X-rays per year*

As your radon number doubles so does your risk!

So at 10pCi/L your risk is like smoking more than a pack a day!

“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. “Test results will be sent to the user either by mail, e-mail or both,” he said.

Mr. Eimen recommends you test your home annually. The Iroquois County Public Health Department will be offering free Radon test kits during the month of January. Please stop in at our office located at 1001 East Grant Street, Watseka, Illinois. 8:30 am-4:30 pm Monday through Friday to pick up your free test kit.

For more information regarding radon, individuals may call the health department (815-432-2483) 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.