

Radon

Radon is a naturally occurring gas that comes from underground, and can seep through the foundation of your building. It is a product of uranium that is found in soil, bedrock and underground water. As the uranium naturally decays, radon is formed, and the only place for it to travel is up and out of the ground—and potentially into your house or apartment. Radon is radioactive, and can be very hazardous to your health, even deadly. It is in fact the second leading cause of lung cancer. What makes radon particularly dangerous is that it is odorless, tasteless and invisible—in other words, it is impossible to detect through your senses alone.

Radon entry can occur *in any home*—it doesn't matter how old or new the building may be, or what materials were used in construction. Radon does not discriminate! Radon gas will enter homes through cracks in basement floors and foundation walls, and also through cracks around service pipes, floor drains, and dirt floors. Sometimes it can contaminate well water. It is estimated that one out of every fifteen homes can have unacceptable radon levels. Schools and workplaces can be equally at risk. The only way to determine if radon is in your house or apartment is to test for it. You can purchase radon test kits at most local hardware stores, and the test kits generally require several days of exposure (depending on the kit) before you mail the test kit to a lab for results.

Identifying the Problem:

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends that you test your home for radon every four years. • When you buy a radon detection kit, make sure it is from a laboratory certified by the National Environmental Health Association's National Radon Proficiency Program. • Hardware stores generally have test kits available. Be sure to follow the instructions carefully on the test kit, to allow the proper exposure time that the kit requires. • Because radon comes from the ground, the best place for a short-term test canister is in the lowest level of your house. • If your house has a basement, put the test kit there. If not, place it in the living room, dining room, or in a bedroom. • Don't put it in a room where moisture is generated – a bathroom, kitchen, or laundry room. Moisture will interfere with the test result. • Place the kit about 20-48 inches off the ground, where it won't be disturbed. • Be sure to have your windows and doors closed 12 hours prior to and during the testing period, only opening doors during necessary entries

and exits. • If you place the detector in a basement, don't place it next to floor drains, floor/wall cracks, or near a sump. • Keep detectors away from ceiling fans, air registers, vents, and exterior walls, or anywhere that there is a draft. • Whether your home tests above this 4 pCi/L threshold or not, it is smart to make sure that cracks in basement floors and walls are sealed with polyurethane caulk. • Caulk can be purchased at a hardware store. This will prevent or reduce the amount of radon leaks in the future. • If you are buying a new home, it is a good idea to have the house tested for radon before committing to the purchase. • The EPA recommends that action be taken in your home if the radon level results are 4 pico-Curies per liter (pCi/L) or more. If your home tests above this level, it is smart to run a second test, to confirm the average radon level. • Taking care of a radon problem will also take care of a wet basement problem. Because water and radon enter a basement the same way (through cracks in the foundation and basement floor), sealing these openings takes care of both problems at once. • If you are building a new home, or if your current residence has tested above 4 pCi/L, you may want to consider installing a "sub-slab depressurization" system in the lowest level of the house. This system pulls radon gas through a pipe that leads directly to the outside air, bypassing your indoor living space completely. Speak to a local contractor about installing a sub-slab ventilation system in your foundation.

For more information, please call Miami-Dade County Healthy Homes Program at **305-470-6877** or open the link below:

http://www.doh.state.fl.us/environment/community/radon/rn_in_fl.htm