EPA United States Environmental Protection Agency

AMERICAN LUNG ASSOCIATION®

Licensed radon measurement specialists in Iowa can be found by going online to **http://www.idph.state.ia.us/Radon/** and searching the lists of certified radon measurement specialists by county or by license number. Additional radon information is available from the state radon program at 800-383-5992, EPA's Web site www.epa.gov/radon and the American Lung Association Web site at www.lungusa.org.

8/2010

Iowa Department of Public Health
Promoting and Protecting the Health of Iowans

IOWA RADON HOME-BUYERS AND SELLERS FACT SHEET

What is Radon?

Radon gas occurs naturally in the soil, and is produced by the radioactive breakdown or decay of uranium and radium. Long ago, glacial activity left behind ground-up deposits of many minerals such as uranium in the soil or upper crust in Iowa. Because radon is a gas it can seep into buildings, including homes. It is an odorless and invisible gas that is also radioactive and harmful to humans when inhaled.

Where is Radon found in Iowa?

EPA has identified all counties in Iowa as Zone 1. Zone 1 counties have a predicted average indoor radon screening level of more than 4 pCi/L (picocuries per liter). The total average indoor radon level in Iowa is 8.5 picocuries per liter (pCi/L) of air, and in the United States it is 1.3 pCi/L of air. Average radon levels of 4 pCi/L are considered elevated, and remediation is recommended.

The primary source of high levels of radon in homes is in the soil below and soil surrounding the home. It is found in new and old homes, and in homes with and without basements. **Based on data collected from radon home tests, the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) estimates that as many as 5 in 7 homes (or greater than 50-70%) across Iowa have elevated radon levels.** Radon levels can vary from area to area and can vary considerably from house to house, even on the same street and neighborhood. A high and low level of radon can be found in homes directly next to each other.

How does Radon get into a home?

Warm air rises, creating a small vacuum in the lower areas of a house. Radon moves through and into the home as air moves from a higher pressure in the soil to a lower pressure in the home. Radon gas seeps into a house the same way air and other soil gases enter: from the soil around and under the home and through cracks in the foundation, floor or walls; hollow-block walls; and openings around floor drains, pipes and sump pumps; and through crawl spaces.

What are the Health Effects of Radon?

There is overwhelming scientific evidence that exposure to elevated levels of radon causes lung cancer in humans. Radiation emitted from radon can cause cellular damage that can lead to cancer when it strikes living tissue in the lungs. Radon is the first leading cause of lung cancer in nonsmokers, and the second leading cause of lung cancer overall. It is responsible for about 21,000 deaths every year in the US. EPA also estimates that long-term exposure to radon potentially causes approximately 400 deaths each year in Iowa.

How do Home Buyers in Iowa find out if a home they are purchasing has elevated levels of Radon?

Home buyers interested in purchasing a home can test the homes for radon by contacting a licensed or certified radon measurement specialist. They can find a list of licensed radon measurement specialists by going online to **http://www.idph.state.ia.us/Radon/** and searching the list of Iowa radon measurement specialists by county, or by contacting a real-estate professional for help on finding a radon testing professional. **Remember, the IDPH, the Environmental Protection Agency, the American Lung Association, and the Surgeon General recommend radon testing all new and existing homes for radon in Iowa before they are sold or before they are transferred to a different owner.**

How can elevated levels of Radon be fixed?

Licensed or credentialed radon mitigation contractors can install a radon mitigation system that provides a permanent solution. A typical radon mitigation system includes a suction point that addresses the soil underneath the structure. A home that has been mitigated will usually have a much lower radon level than the EPA's action level of 4 picocuries per liter. Addressing residential radon issues is an excellent step toward assuring good indoor air quality. A list of licensed radon mitigation contractors can be obtained from the state radon program by going online to **http://www.idph.state.ia.us/Radon/** and then clicking on the list of Iowa Credentialed Radon Mitigation Specialists. A radon information packet can also be obtained by calling 1-800-383-5992.

Additional Information:

Additional information about radon is available from the state radon program at 800-383-5992, and EPA's Web site, www.epa.gov/radon or the American Lung Association Web site at www.lungusa.org.