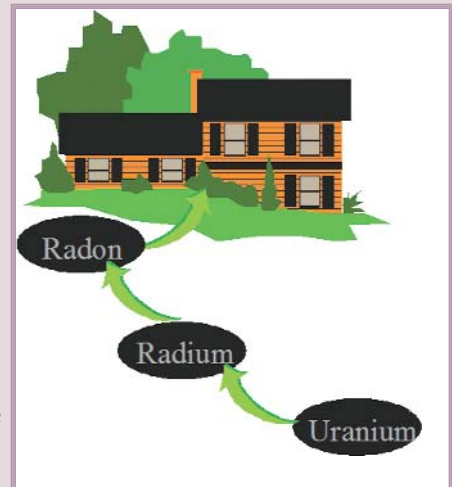


Radon

Idaho Department of Health and Welfare
Division of Health
Bureau of Community and Environmental Health
Indoor Environment Program

Radon is a radioactive gas that comes from the natural breakdown of uranium found in most rocks and soil. In some cases, well water may be a source of radon. You cannot see it, smell it or taste it. When outdoors, radon mixes with fresh air and is usually diluted to low levels. However, once inside an enclosed building, such as a home or school, radon can build up to high levels.

The amount of radon indoors depends on how easily the radon can travel through the soil, how the building is constructed, and the amount of radon in the soil underneath the building. Radon can be found all over the United States, in old and new homes, and in homes with and without basements.



Radon Could be in Your Home

Radon can move up through the ground and enter buildings through cracks and holes in the foundation. Radon levels are generally highest in basements and groundfloor rooms that are in contact with soil. Factors such as design, construction, and ventilation of the home can affect the pathways and forces that draw radon indoors. The only way to know if you have a radon in your home is to test for it. Tests should be performed in the lowest lived-in area of the house and should be approved by National Environmental Health Association (NEHA). For information on testing companies in your area or locations where you can purchase a test kit, contact the Idaho Radon Hotline at (800) - 445 - 8647 or visit our website at www.healthy.idaho.gov under the Environmental Health section.



Lowering your Radon Levels

EPA recommends that you have a qualified contractor fix your home. However, if you want to do the work yourself, please call the Radon Hotline number to obtain a technical assistance document. There are several methods a contractor can use to lower radon levels in your home.



Some techniques prevent radon from entering your home, while others reduce radon levels after it has entered the home. EPA generally recommends methods that prevent radon entry. These systems use a pipe to remove radon gas from below the concrete floor and the foundation before it can enter the home.

If you live in an area with high radon levels and are building a new home, you should consider installing radon-resistant construction features. It is more cost-effective to include these features while building a home, rather than fixing an existing home. For a list of radon mitigators in your area call the radon hotline or visit our website.

Radon in Idaho

Several studies have been done to determine radon levels in Idaho and different results have been found each time. In 1985 and 1986, state and local health officials screened 1,018 homes for radon. Approximately one-third of the homes had high levels of radon. In 1989 and 1990, Idaho and EPA conducted a joint survey intended to be more representative of the entire state. A two-day charcoal canister test was used by 1,142 homeowners. The results, received in January 1992, indicated that more than 20 percent of the homes in Idaho had high levels of radon. Since 1990, the state radon project has been tracking the number of tests reported in Idaho. As of August 2005, 6,668 homes have reported results to the project with 37% of the homes testing high for radon. It is difficult to predict which homes may have high radon levels. Homes built side by side, on the same soil or rock, or with similar designs, can have very different radon levels. Therefore, it is recommended that all homes be tested.



No level of radon is considered absolutely safe, radon levels in a home should be reduced as much as possible. The amount of radon in the air is measured in picoCuries per Liter of air, or pCi/L. The EPA recommends fixing your home if the results of one long-term test or the average of two short-term tests taken in the lowest lived-in area of the home show radon levels of 4 pCi/L or higher. The higher the radon level, the more quickly you should have your home fixed.



For More Information

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