

News from the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services



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DES Encourages Testing For Radon

Concord, NH – The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (DES) recently began mailing invitations to several thousand homeowners in pre-selected areas of the state inviting them to participate in a state-run radon testing program.

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that may enter homes through the foundation and/or the water supply. When radon accumulates in indoor air, it can increase the health risk of developing lung cancer. New Hampshire has some of the highest levels of radon in the country. Radon is the second largest cause of lung cancer in the United States and the primary cause among persons with no smoking history.

In an effort to determine how widespread the radon problem is in New Hampshire, DES is offering this testing opportunity to homeowners in the pre-selected areas at no cost. The selection of testing locations is based on the bedrock geology of the area and the data gaps in the current statewide radon data base.

You can't see radon and you can't smell or taste it, so the only way to know if it is a problem in your home is to test for it. Radon comes from the natural (radioactive) breakdown of uranium in soil, rock, and water. It can dissolve in groundwater and be released into the air you breathe.

“Increased awareness of radon and its harmful health effects can greatly benefit the residents of New Hampshire. Testing for radon is easy and inexpensive,” said DES Commissioner Tom Burack. “I encourage all homeowners to test their homes for radon.”

In general, the migration of radon out of the soil and into the air contributes the largest percent of radon found in the average home. Radon from a groundwater type water supply source, particularly a bedrock well (also known as an artesian or drilled well), contributes the next largest percentage of radon in the home. DES recommends testing for radon in both the indoor air of your home and, if applicable, your private drinking water well. Testing for radon in both water and air is an important part of protecting public health. It is inexpensive and easy. If you find radon in your home, you can install a radon reduction system. They work well and are not too costly. Some systems can reduce radon by 99 percent.

If you receive an invitation to participate in the state run radon testing program, please return it to DES and a radon testing kit will be mailed to your home. If you are not selected for the program this year and are interested in testing for radon in your home, commercial radon testing kits for air are available at major hardware stores. Water samples from private wells can be tested for radon at some analytical laboratories and at the DES laboratory in Concord.

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