



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Give the gift of a healthy home with radon test kits

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Looking for a thoughtful gift that's small, doesn't cost much and saves lives? Give a radon test kit this holiday season and help jumpstart January as national Radon Action Month.

"Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States, causing an estimated 22,000 deaths a year," said James L. McNees, assistant director of the Alabama Department of Public Health's Office of Radiation Control. "Epidemiological studies show that breathing elevated radon for an extended period of time increases the occurrence of lung cancer. The best time to test for radon is during the colder months, when a home is closed and radon levels are likely to build to their highest concentrations. So this is the perfect time of year to give a test kit as a gift and urge friends or family to test their homes."

High levels of indoor radon have been found in many areas of Alabama, however it appears to occur most frequently in homes across the Tennessee Valley and in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains from Jefferson and Shelby counties to Cleburne County. Because radon is a colorless, odorless gas that occurs naturally in soil and rocks through the breakdown of uranium, testing is the only way to know the radon level in a home.

Several national laboratories sell radon test kits. Radon test kits weigh only a few ounces and cost about \$10 or less. Testing for radon should be done on the lowest level of the home on which people spend a lot of time, so a finished basement or a basement containing a workshop is a good place to test. Kitchens are not recommended testing areas.

"Testing directions are on the kit, and it only takes a few days to obtain a sample," McNees said. "Most people can easily do a radon test on their home."

If test results are above the levels recommended by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Alabama Department of Public Health, homeowners should consider installing a radon remediation system.

While radon test kits are available at many larger home improvement stores, homeowners may get one to test their own home for wholesale at many local offices of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. More information on radon, including a list of certified radon testers and mitigators is available on the Internet at <http://www.aces.edu/radon> or by calling 1-800-582-1866. To learn more about this and other radiation and health issues visit the ADPH Web site at <http://www.adph.org/RADIATION/Default.asp?TemplateID=92>

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