



## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

RSA Tower 201 Monroe Street, Suite 914 Montgomery, AL 36104

Phone 334-206-5300 Fax 334-206-5534

[www.adph.org](http://www.adph.org)

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## **Test your home for radon; protect your health**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

#### **CONTACT:**

Beverly Jo Carswell  
(334) 206-5388

Do you know that winter is the perfect time to protect the health of yourself and your family from radon? Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States, and is the leading cause of lung cancer in nonsmokers.

"The Environmental Protection Agency estimates radon causes 22,000 deaths in the U.S. a year," said James L. McNees, director of the Office of Radiation Control, Alabama Department of Public Health. "The best time to test for radon is during the colder months, when your home is closed and radon levels are likely to build to their highest concentrations. So this is the time of year to test your home for cancer-causing radon gas. Then urge friends or family to test their homes."

High levels of indoor radon have been found in many areas of Alabama; however, radon 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.

Radon test kits weigh only a few ounces and cost about \$15 or less. Testing for radon should be done on the lowest level of the home on which the occupants spend 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 4.0 picoCuries of radon per liter of air (pCi/l), the action level recommended by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Alabama Department of Public Health, homeowners should consider installing a radon remediation system."

Radon test kits are available at many larger home improvement stores. As a public service many local offices of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System will sell homeowners a kit to test their own home at the wholesale price of \$5. Call your local County Extension office for details.

The average cost of a radon remediation system is between \$800 and \$1,200, depending on the square footage of the residence and the difficulty in finding a suitable pathway for the radon removal pipe. Homes with a crawl space, no gravel under the slab, or a completely finished lower level sometimes cost more.

The Alabama Radon Program is a joint effort of the Alabama Department of Public Health and Alabama Cooperative Extension System working together to reduce future occurrences of lung cancer in Alabama. To learn more about this and other radiation and health issues visit the ADPH Web site at <http://www.adph.org/radiation/>.

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