



## NEWS RELEASE

### ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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## Inexpensive radon test kits are thoughtful gifts for your family and friends

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Looking for some practical gifts that are inexpensive and can save lives? Consider buying radon test kits as gifts for your family and friends and encourage them to test their homes. In the United States, radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in smokers and the leading cause of lung cancer in nonsmokers.

"You can't see, smell or taste radon, but it could be present at a dangerous level in your home," cautioned James McNees, director of the Alabama Department of Public Health Office of Radiation Control. "The cold winter months when homes are closed and radon levels are likely to build to their highest concentrations are the perfect time of year to test."

Each year radon claims the lives of about 21,000 Americans. The Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Surgeon General urge all Americans to protect their health by testing their homes, schools and other buildings for radon. Exposure to radon is a preventable health risk, and testing radon levels in your home can help prevent unnecessary exposure. If a high radon level is detected in your residence, you can take steps to protect yourself and your family by addressing the problem.

High levels of indoor radon have been found in many areas of Alabama, but 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 learn 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 where 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."

While radon test kits are available at many larger home improvement stores, Alabama homeowners can order kits online through the National Radon Program Services at <http://sosradon.org/>.

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. Systems cost 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.

Visit [adph.org/radiation](http://adph.org/radiation) to learn more about this and other radiation and health issues.

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