

For Immediate Release

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North Central District Health Department

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Testing for Radon

January is National Radon Action Month. The winter months are an opportune time for Nebraskans to test their homes for radon. The winter months allow the radon levels to increase inside of homes. Families are spending more time indoors during the winter months with windows and doors shut tight. January is a good time to test for this radioactive, invisible, odorless gas.

The Environmental Protection Association (EPA) estimates that approximately 21,000 lung cancer deaths each year are radon related. Exposure to radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States. Radon comes from the decay of naturally occurring uranium in the earth's soil and can accumulate indoors to dangerous levels.

Simple do-it-yourself radon test kits are available. Testing is very easy and free test kits are available through North Central District Health Department. They can be picked up at our office at 422 East Douglas, O'Neill, local county extension offices, at local farm and home shows or mailed to your home. The EPA recommends that homes with radon levels of 4 picocuries or more of radon should be fixed to prevent accumulation of the gas indoors. There are several methods available to successfully reduce the high radon levels in homes. Homeowners can perform some reduction methods, but a trained professional will be able to determine the best methods for reducing the radon levels.

Methods for reducing radon levels inside the home include sealing cracks and penetrations in the basement. It is difficult to seal all cracks and new cracks will develop, so this is not considered a permanent solution to radon problems. Increasing the amount of ventilation inside the home can also help reduce radon levels. Ventilation does not prevent radon entry and if done improperly can increase the radon levels or cause damage to the home, so this is not considered a permanent solution either. Providing exhaust appliances (i.e. furnaces, water heaters, clothes dryers) with their own source of intake air can also reduce the amount of radon in the home. The most effective method of reducing radon levels is changing the ventilation underneath the home by installing a fan driven system. The fan drive systems remove the radon from below the foundation or crawlspace before it is able to enter the home. The radon is drawn into the pipes and exhausted into the atmosphere where it is diluted to safe levels.

If you have any questions, please call Jacqueline Wilson at 1-877-336-2406. *North Central District Health Department* serves Antelope, Boyd, Brown, Cherry, Holt, Keya Paha, Knox, Pierce, and Rock Counties.