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Celebrate Earth Day - Test Your Home for Radon

Many Areas of State Have High Levels of Radon

FRANKFORT, KY. (April 20, 2017) – As part of Earth Day 2017, the Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH), within the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS), is helping to spread the word about the important role the environment plays in your health. DPH encourages Kentuckians to learn more about the potential health effects of radon exposure and how to check your home for this potentially dangerous gas.

“Earth Day is an excellent time to consider the environment, its impact on our health and hazards that may be in our own home,” said CHFS Secretary Vickie Yates Brown Glisson. “Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer next to smoking and is prevalent in many areas of Kentucky. It’s time we all learned a little more about radon, how to detect it in our home and what can be done if levels are elevated.”

Radon occurs naturally in the environment and can be found in rocks such as granite and limestone. An odorless, colorless, tasteless gas, radon produces radioactive energy when it decays.

Many Kentucky counties contain radon levels in excess of what is considered by to be safe. In Jefferson County, for example, data indicate more than 49 percent of homes contain elevated radon levels and in Fayette County, more than 55 percent of homes contain elevated radon levels.

“There is no way to know if your house has high levels of radon unless you get your house tested,” said Rebecca Gillis, director of the Division of Public Health Protection and Safety. “The good news is that radon levels in a home can be dramatically reduced or even eliminated.”

More information about radon levels across the state is available at [Kentucky EnviroHealthLink](http://KentuckyEnviroHealthLink), a website designated to exploring how the environment affects health. The website includes a [Radon Testing Map](#) for the Commonwealth.

“Because of the ways that radon and tobacco smoke damage the lungs, high radon levels are especially dangerous for people who smoke,” said Janie Cambron, program manager for Kentucky EnviroHealthLink. “Your environment matters, especially in the case of radon. Smokers who live in homes with high radon levels have a risk of lung cancer that’s 10 times higher than nonsmokers who live in homes with high radon levels.”



According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which supports DPH's [Radon Program](#) through a federal grant award, elevated radon levels in homes are common. In fact, an estimated 1 in 15 homes in the U.S. have high radon levels.

“Living in a home with high radon levels can be dangerous for your health. Radon is estimated to cause more than 20,000 deaths each year in the U.S.,” said Clay Hardwick, coordinator for Kentucky’s Radon Program.

Radon builds up in homes over time and cannot be seen, tasted, or smelled. The only way to know if radon levels are elevated is to test, which is simple to complete and inexpensive. Test kits are available for free through several local health departments throughout the state, as well as through the Kentucky Radon program by calling (502) 564-4856.

Homeowners can test their homes with a simple kit. Radon reduction can be done with the help of a licensed radon mitigation contractor.

Getting your home tested and quitting smoking are key. Quit Now Kentucky (1-800-784-8669) is a free resource available to help citizens quit smoking or using tobacco products, with many personalized materials, including text messaging, online websites, and more.

For more information on radon, radon testing and mitigation or to order a test kit online, visit:

- Kentucky’s Radon Program website, <http://chfs.ky.gov/dph/info/phps/radongas.htm>.
- CDC’s Radon website, <http://www.cdc.gov/radon>.

The Kentucky Radon Program focuses education efforts through a coalition of county health departments, universities, and non-profit organizations to increase awareness about radon testing and mitigation in efforts to reduce lung cancer incidence in Kentucky.

EnviroHealthLink, Kentucky’s Environmental Public Health Tracking Network, which works closely with the Radon Program and other initiatives, provides information and data about how the environment affects human health. Kentucky joins the national network of 25 states and 1 city that tracks information on various topics including air quality, drinking water, asthma and cancer. Follow EnvirohealthLink on Twitter at @EnviroHealthKy.

**Editor’s Note: Video footage related to radon awareness is available [here](#).*

The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is home to most of the state's human services and healthcare programs, including the Department for Medicaid Services, the Department for Community Based Services the Department for Public Health and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full- and part-time employees located across the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.