

Delta Gamma Well Aware

Encompasses eight dimensions: Social, Spiritual, Physical, Emotional, Vocational, Intellectual, Financial and Leadership Development

THE DANGERS OF RADON

January 2005 Surgeon General Health Advisory:

“Indoor radon is the second-leading cause of lung cancer in the United States and breathing it over prolonged periods can present a significant health risk to families all over the country. It’s important to know that this threat is completely preventable. Radon can be detected with a simple test and fixed through well-established venting techniques.”

Radon is a toxic, colorless, odorless and tasteless gas that can be found in well water, building materials and the earth and rock beneath homes. It is produced by the decay of naturally occurring uranium in soil and water.

- Health authorities like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Surgeon General, the American Lung Association and the American Medical Association recommend radon testing and encourage public action when levels are above 4.0 pCi/L.
- Radon is found in outdoor and indoor air everywhere, and the Environmental Protection Agency recommends no higher exposure than 4.0 pCi/L; however, there is no known safe level of exposure to radon, so they recommend fixing homes at levels between 2 and 4.
- Most Americans are exposed to radon in their homes, especially in rooms that are below grade, such as basements, rooms that are in contact with the ground and those rooms immediately above them.

How to Test for Radon

- Short term tests that last from two to 90 days do not give a year-round average, but can provide fast results when deciding whether or not to fix your home.
- Longer term tests remain in your home for more than 90 days and will give you a year-round average.
- Tests can be done by a professional or on your own, with an at-home radon test kit available at many retail and hardware stores.

Radon and Lung Cancer

- Radon is a lung carcinogen according to all major national and international organizations that have examined the health risks of radon.
- Radon in indoor air is estimated to cause 21,000 lung cancer deaths each year in the United States, and smokers are at higher risk because of the synergistic effects of radon coupled with smoking.
- Approximately 12% of lung cancers annually in the U.S. are attributable to radon. It is the number one cause of lung cancer among non-smokers in the United States.

Radon Risk for People Who Smoke

Radon Level (pCi/L)	# of exposed smokers per 1,000 that could get lung cancer	Risk of cancer from radon exposure compares to...	What to do? Stop smoking and...
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20	260	250 times the risk of drowning	Fix your home
10	150	200 times the risk of dying in a home fire	Fix your home
8	120	30 times the risk of dying in a fall	Fix your home
4	62	5 times the risk of dying in a car crash	Fix your home
2	32	6 times the risk of dying from poison	Consider fixing between 2 and 4 pCi/L
1.3	20	(Average indoor radon level)	n/a
0.4	3	(Average outdoor radon level)	n/a

Sources: Environmental Protection Agency and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Radon Risk for People Who Have Never Smoked

Radon Level (pCi/L)	# of exposed non-smokers per 1,000 that could get lung cancer	Risk of cancer from radon exposure compares to...	What to do? Stop smoking and...
20	36	35 times the risk of drowning	Fix your home
10	18	20 times the risk of dying in a home fire	Fix your home
8	15	4 times the risk of dying in a fall	Fix your home
4	7	The risk of dying in a car crash	Fix your home
2	4	The risk of dying from poison	Consider fixing between 2 and 4 pCi/L
1.3	2	(Average indoor radon level)	n/a
0.4	n/a	(Average outdoor radon level)	n/a

Sources: Environmental Protection Agency and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

How to Fix your Home

- The primary method of reducing radon in the home is a vent pipe system and fan (known as a soil suction radon reduction system), which pulls radon from beneath the house and vents it to the outside.
- Sealing foundation cracks and other openings makes these systems more effective and cost-efficient.
- The right system depends on the design and age of your home.
- Most contractors can fix radon problems for around \$1,200, ranging from \$800 to \$2,500.
- The cost is much less if a passive system was installed during construction.

Radon Resources

- National Radon Information Line, 1.800.767.7236 or 1.800.SOS.RADON
- Discounted Radon Test Kit, www.nsc.org/issues/radon/radonkitcoupons.pdf
- State Radon Contact, www.epa.gov/iaq/whereyoulive.html

Wellness Resources

This information is a summary from the following resources:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, www.epa.gov/radon/
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov

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