

## January is National Radon Awareness Month

The Environmental Protection Agency has designated January as National Radon Awareness Month. Radon exposure is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S. (Important note: If you smoke and your home has radon, your risk of lung cancer can be even higher). In fact, radon claims the lives of about 20,000 Americans each year. It has been found in elevated levels in homes in every state. There isn't an area of the country that is free from risk. It is estimated that one out of three homes in Idaho has elevated radon levels. The only way to know if your home is under the Environmental Protection Agency action level of 4 pCi/L is to test.

What is radon gas? Radon gas is a natural occurring, odorless, tasteless, colorless gas produced from decay of uranium in soil, rock, and water. While radon levels in outdoor air pose a relatively low threat to human health, radon can accumulate to dangerous levels indoors.

High levels of radon in homes usually come from the surrounding soil. The way radon enters your home is through cracks and openings in the foundation; however, radon can be found anywhere in your house. It can be found in homes with and without basements.

Because exposure to radon is a preventable health risk, the U.S. Surgeon General recommends that all homes in the U.S. be tested for radon. Testing is easy and inexpensive. It's as easy as opening a package, placing a radon detector in a designated area, and, after a set number of days, sending the detector back to a lab for analysis. The lab will then inform you of your radon test results. If a high radon level is detected in your home, easy steps can be taken to fix the problem to protect yourself and your family. For a FREE radon test kit, visit [www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov](http://www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov) (first click on "Health," then "Radon," then under "Hot Topics" click on free radon test kit). For additional information about radon, contact Idaho Careline (211) or 1-208-334-5717.

If you have plans to buy a new home in the future, you may consider looking for builders who use radon-resistant new construction. To find out more about this feature, visit [www.epa.gov/radon](http://www.epa.gov/radon).

This article was submitted by Traci Lambson, MHE, who works at the Southeastern District Health Department as a Health Education Specialist.