



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH - GOVERNOR

# NEWS

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## **Governor Blagojevich proclaims January Radon Action Month**

*Urges people to test homes for radon, which is second-leading cause  
of lung cancer in U.S.*

SPRINGFIELD – Governor Rod R. Blagojevich today proclaimed January as Radon Action Month in Illinois and urged people throughout the state to test their homes to see if they have elevated levels of the radioactive gas known to cause lung cancer. Radon is recognized as the second-leading cause of lung cancer in the nation, behind smoking, but is the leading cause of lung cancer for non-smokers.

“Radon is the second-leading cause of lung cancer, but it’s a health risk that can be eliminated if people test their homes and take action to reduce excessive levels,” said Gov. Blagojevich. “During January, I’m encouraging everyone to take a few moments to test their homes for radon, and to take steps to reduce those levels to keep their families safe.”

Radon is a colorless, odorless, tasteless radioactive gas that comes from the radioactive decay of naturally occurring uranium in the soil. It can enter homes and buildings through small cracks in the foundation, sump pumps or soil in crawlspaces. The National Academy of Sciences and the Surgeon General estimate that 21,000 radon-related lung cancer deaths occur annually in the United States, as many as 1,160 of those in Illinois.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) has established 4.0 picocuries per liter of air (pCi/L) as the action level for radon in homes. It is estimated that the risk of developing lung cancer at that level is about seven lung cancer deaths per 1,000 persons. The USEPA and the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) recommend taking steps to reduce radon levels in your home if test results indicate levels of 4.0 pCi/L or above.

Blagojevich noted that a new law should increase public awareness about the health risks associated with radon. The Illinois Radon Awareness Act, which took effect Jan. 1, requires sellers to provide anyone buying a home, condominium or other residential property in Illinois with information about indoor radon exposure and the fact that radon is the leading cause of lung cancer in non-smokers and the second leading cause overall. The new law doesn’t require that homes be tested for radon prior to the sale or that radon remediation work

be conducted if test results show high levels of radon. However, under the new law, if a radon test has been conducted on the home those results must be provided to the buyer.

Testing a home for radon can be conducted by the home's residents or by a professional licensed by IEMA. The agency recommends that any radon tests done in relation to a real estate transaction be conducted by a licensed contractor.

“Winter is a great time to test your home for radon because you need ‘closed house’ conditions for an accurate test, and here in Illinois our windows and doors are usually kept shut this time of year to keep the cold out,” said IEMA Director Andrew Velasquez III. “It’s very easy to test your own home, or you can have one of the 204 IEMA-licensed radon measurement contractors in Illinois do the test for you. The important thing is to get your home tested to find out if your home has a radon hazard, and take steps to reduce radon levels if you find out they’re too high.”

Velasquez said IEMA is offering free radon test kits to help people test their homes. Requests for test kits can be submitted through the agency’s Web site at [www.radon.illinois.gov](http://www.radon.illinois.gov) or toll-free hotline at 1-800-325-1245. Tests kits can also be purchased as most home improvement and department stores.

IEMA’s Division of Nuclear Safety licenses radon measurement and mitigation professionals to ensure they have the proper equipment, specialized training and technical skills to do the job right. IEMA encourages anyone who discovers their home has elevated levels of radon to contact a licensed radon mitigation professional to correct the problem. Depending on the home, radon mitigation can cost between \$800-1,200.

In September 2006, IEMA released a report showing that nearly half of 22,000 Illinois homes tested by professional radon measurement contractors had potentially unsafe levels of radon. The study also found 80 counties where few, if any, professional tests for the naturally occurring radioactive gas known to cause lung cancer were conducted during the two-year study period.

While only data on home radon measurements by licensed contractors during the study period were available for the 2006 report, the IEMA radon program receives results from the free test kits the agency is distributing, and that information will enable the agency to get an even clearer picture of the occurrence of radon in Illinois.

More information about radon, including several radon publications, results from the statewide radon study, lists of licensed radon measurement and mitigation professionals and requests for free home test kits are all available on the IEMA radon website. Radon information and free home test kits are also available through the toll-free radon hotline.

The Governor’s proclamation reads as follows:

*WHEREAS, radon is a colorless, odorless, tasteless radioactive gas that is released from the decay of uranium in soil and can seep into homes and buildings up to dangerous levels; and*

*WHEREAS, breathing radon over prolonged periods can pose a significant health risk. The Surgeon General of the United States issued a national health advisory warning Americans*

*that indoor radon is the second-leading cause of lung cancer in the country. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, more than 21,000 lung cancer deaths every year are related to radon; and*

*WHEREAS, in the State of Illinois, as many as 1,160 men and women are at risk of developing radon-related lung cancer every year. The health risks, however, are completely preventable; and*

*WHEREAS, radon can be detected with a simple test and fixed through well-established venting techniques. Since 2002, more than 50,000 measurements have been taken in our state, and homes that exceed the Environmental Protection Agency's Radon Action Level of 4.0 pCi/L have been corrected; and*

*WHEREAS, the Illinois Radon Awareness Act will go into effect January 1, 2008, and requires sellers to provide anyone buying a home, condominium or other residential property in Illinois with information about indoor radon exposure and its link to lung cancer; and*

*WHEREAS, it is also important that homes are tested for radon every two years. Consequently, the Illinois Emergency Management Agency and the American Lung Association of Illinois are partnering to provide radon information and guidance to families in our state about testing their homes regularly to find out how much radon they might be breathing; and*

*WHEREAS, in addition to the Emergency Management Agency and the American Lung Association, many organizations throughout the country will raise awareness about the health risks posed by radon during the month of January;*

*THEREFORE, I, Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor of the State of Illinois, do hereby proclaim January 2008 as **RADON ACTION MONTH** in Illinois, and urge all the citizens of our state to test their homes for radon and reduce their risk of developing lung cancer by taking actions to lower radon level in their homes when necessary.*