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Winter is ideal time to test your home for Radon

Ithaca, Stanton, St. Johns~ The old saying, 'what you don't know can't hurt you' certainly doesn't apply when it comes to the presence of radon in your home.

Radon is a silent killer that invades nearly one in eight Michigan homes, according to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). Radon has no warning symptoms; it can't be seen, smelled or tasted and contrary to popular belief does not cause headaches, nausea, or fatigue. It is the second-leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers, is the second-leading cause of lung cancer in the United States, results in more than 21,000 new lung cancers and kills nearly 15,000 Americans each year.

This naturally occurring radioactive gas is found in almost any kind of soil or rock. It travels through the ground to the air above, and into your home through cracks and other holes in the foundation, floor or walls (sump openings; crawlspaces; floor/wall joints; space around plumbing, wiring, or ductwork; etc.). Any home – old or new – may have a radon problem.

"There is only one way to know for sure if your home has an unsafe level of radon," said Robert Graham, Medical Director for the Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD), "and that is to test, and now is the ideal time."

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) winter is in fact the ideal time to test for radon because doors and windows are kept shut so the radon level isn't diluted by the introduction of fresh air.

The EPA recommends that every residence be tested for radon by taking a short-term test first. Short-term test kits may be obtained at MMDHD free-of-charge. If the result is four picocuries per liter of air (4 pCi/l) or higher, you should follow up with a long-term test to measure the radon level's year-round average. Long-term kits are also available at MMDHD for \$20.60.

If unsafe radon levels are found in your home it is very important that you take immediate action to reduce those dangerous levels. The DEQ strongly suggests that people use a trained and certified radon mitigation (reduction) contractor who will guarantee results below 4 pCi/l.

To obtain a radon test kit, or a list of local certified radon remediation contractors, contact MMDHD:

Clinton County Branch Office: 1307 E Townsend Road, St. Johns – Phone: 989-224-2195

Gratiot County Branch Office: 151 Commerce Drive, Ithaca – Phone: 989-875-3681

Montcalm County Branch Office: 615 N State Street, Stanton – Phone: 989-831-5237

For additional information, visit MMDHDs website at www.mmdhd.org, the Environmental Protection Agency's website at www.epa.gov, or the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality's website at www.michigan.gov/deq.

Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.

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