

Radon is Real!

The threat from this toxic gas is unrecognized by most homeowners

Q: What is radon?

A: Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that comes from the soil. It is produced when uranium decays and works its way up through the soil into the atmosphere. Granite rock, common in Georgia, can contain significant amounts of uranium.

Q: Why should I be concerned about radon?

A: Radon causes more deaths each year in the U.S. than drunk drivers. It is the second leading cause of lung cancer and the leading cause of lung cancer in non-smokers. Radon kills 22,000 people every year in the U.S.; 600 of those will be in Georgia.

Radon is a class A carcinogen. Scientific data backing radon research is among the most reliable, based on human studies rather than animal trials or computer models. The Surgeon General has issued a health advisory concerning radon exposure, stating that all U.S. homes should be tested for radon and fixed if the level is high. There is no acceptable, safe level of radon.

As you breathe, radon and radon decay products enter your lungs. These substances release small bursts of energy that can permanently damage lung tissue DNA, and lead to lung cancer.

People all over Georgia should be concerned about radon and test their homes. You can't see, taste or smell radon. Outdoors, radon is quickly diluted by the atmosphere and poses no problem. But if radon seeps into your home from soil beneath your home, it could build to hazardous levels in the relatively stagnant air in your home's living space.

Q: How do I know if I am at risk of radon exposure?

A: The only way to know is to test your home, since you can't see, smell or taste it – and it doesn't cause any immediate symptoms. You can have radon in your home no matter how old it is, how it is built, or how it is heated. Even if your neighbor next door has tested and found no problem, you may have high radon in your home because geology changes rapidly.

Q: How do I test my home for radon?

A: There are several sources of radon testing. You may get a complimentary kit at many UGA Cooperative Extension offices throughout Georgia. Home Improvement stores and hardware stores often sell radon test kits or homeowners may choose to have a professional radon measurement specialist test their home.

There's no reason to be afraid of testing. You won't have to tear down your home or move out if there is a radon problem. Fortunately, it's usually easy and relatively inexpensive to fix.

Q: Can new homes be built to be radon resistant?

A: Yes. If you are planning to build a new home, ask your contractor to install a radon mitigation system during construction. Building the system in up front costs much less than adding it after the home is built.

Q: What if I get a high reading (4 pCi/L or higher) from my radon test?

A: Don't panic. You'll need to confirm the first high reading with a second test. If the second test has similar results, it is best to contact a trained, certified radon mitigation contractor for help.

Typical costs for remedying the problem run from \$1,800 to \$2,500. The contractor will probably use a combination of sealing techniques and a system that pulls air from beneath your home by using a vent stack and exhaust fan and vents it above the eave line.