

Indoor Air Quality: Radon

Radon is a cancer-causing gas

You can't see radon. And you can't smell it or taste it. But it may be a problem in your home.

Radon is estimated to cause thousands of deaths each year. That's because when you breathe air containing radon, you can get lung cancer. In fact, **radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States today.** Only smoking causes more lung cancer deaths. **If you smoke and your home has high radon levels, your risk of lung cancer is even higher.**

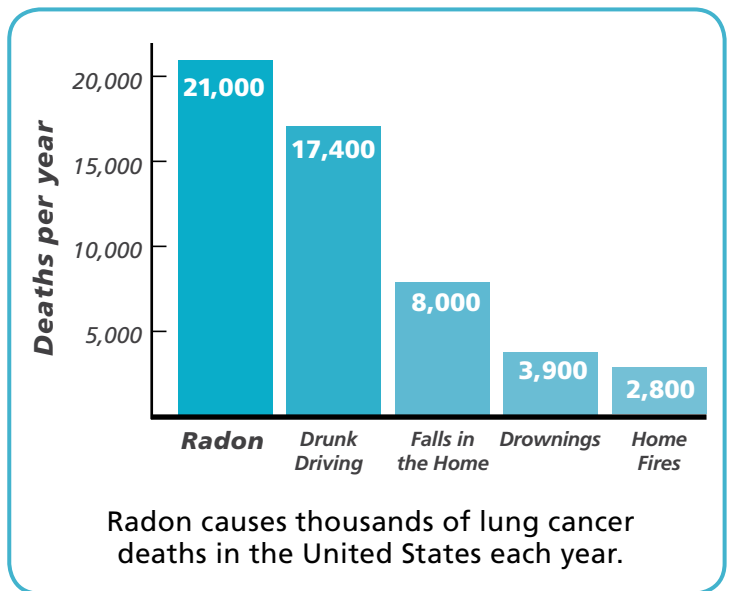
Utah has a high rate of radon in homes

Radon comes from the natural (radioactive) breakdown of uranium in soil, rock, and water. It gets into the air you breathe. It can get into any type of building — homes, offices, and schools — but you and your family are most likely to get your greatest exposure at home, where you spend most of your time.

In the U.S., nearly 1 in every 15 homes has high radon levels. **In Utah, the rate is 1 in every 3 homes.** Utah also has one of the lowest rates of people testing their homes.

You can fix a radon problem

Most homes can be fixed for about the same cost as other common home repairs. In some cases it's possible to get rid of almost all of the radon in your home. Even very high levels can be reduced to levels that are okay.



What to do:

- **Test your home.** It's easy and cheap.
 - A do-it-yourself radon test kit costs about \$9.
 - To order one, go to: <http://deq.utah.gov/ProgramsServices/programs/radiation/radon/>.
- **If your radon level is high, fix your home.** Most homes can be fixed for about the same cost as other common home repairs.

See page 2 for more information on testing and fixing your home.

How to test your home

Testing is easy and should only take a few minutes of your time. The test will have instructions for how, when, and where to do the test.

Once you have finished the test, you will seal the package and send it to the lab right away for analysis. You should get your test results within a few weeks. The results will state the amount of radon in the air, measured in “picocuries per liter of air,” or pCi/L.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends these steps for testing:

- 1 Do a short-term test.** This test stays in your home anywhere from 2 to 90 days, depending on the test. If your result is 4 pCi/L or higher, do a follow-up test (step 2) to be sure.
- 2 Follow up with either a long-term test or a second short-term test.**
 - For a better sense of your year-round average radon level, you can do a long-term test. These tests stay in your home for more than 90 days.
 - For faster results, do a second short-term test.
 - **If your result was 8 pCi/L or higher, do a second short-term test right away.**
- 3 If your tests results were higher than 4 pCi/L, fix your home.** The higher your short-term results, the more important it is to fix your home.

If you prefer, or if you are buying or selling a home, you can hire a qualified tester. Contact the Utah Indoor Radon Coordinator for a list of qualified testers.

How to fix your home

There are several ways to lower the level of radon in your home. A contractor specializing in radon can recommend the best method based on the design of your home or other factors.

The most common way is a vent pipe system and fan. The system pulls radon from beneath the house and vents it to the outside. This does not require major changes to your home.

If you are planning major work on your home, **test the area for radon before you begin.** If you have a radon problem, you may be able fix it as part of the project for much less money. **Always test again after work is completed.**

For more information

The information in this fact sheet is adapted from the EPA booklet, *A Citizen's Guide to Radon: The Guide to Protecting Yourself and Your Family from Radon.*

To learn more:

- Visit www.epa.gov/radon where you can read:
 - *A Consumer's Guide to Radon Reduction: How to Fix Your Home*
 - *Building Radon Out: A Step-by-Step Guide on How to Build Radon-Resistant Homes*
- Visit *The Utah Radon Program Website* (<http://deq.utah.gov/ProgramsServices/programs/radiation/radon/>). This site can help you:
 - Order a radon test kit and test your home
 - Find a qualified tester or a radon contractor
 - Learn more about radon in your neighborhood
- Call the Utah Indoor Radon Coordinator at 801-536-0091

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