

Have you ordered your radon test?

Beginning January 1, 2008 the majority of residential real estate sales will include a Radon Warning Statement, advising buyers that the home they are purchasing may have elevated levels of radon and that living in the home may increase their chance of developing radon-induced lung cancer.

Radon is estimated to cause about 21,000 lung cancer deaths per year, according to the EPA's 2003 Assessment of Risks from Radon in Homes (EPA 402-R03-003). Across Chicagoland more than 37% of homes have levels at or above the Action Level of 4.0picoCuries per liter of air (pCi/l) set by the EPA and adopted by the state of Illinois. If radon levels on any monitor in a home test at or above 4.0pCi/l, action should be taken to lower the

levels. Elevated radon levels can always be fixed. A typical remediation system costs anywhere from \$800 to \$2000 and takes less than one day to install. Mitigation systems work 24 hours a day to actively keep radon levels low, throughout the season and over the years.

Radon tests can be completed within your 5-day inspection period. Radon tests are a minimum of 48 hours in length and are performed by state-licensed technicians using professional continuous radon monitors. These monitors record data hourly and have features that help to detect tampering. At the end of the test, the average of the data collected is used to determine whether or not mitigation is warranted. Preliminary results are available to you immediately at the end of the test, and the verified, complete report is delivered to you by email or fax the same day the test is concluded.

You may want to think twice. In Illinois, radon is a disclosure issue, meaning that homeowners must disclose any knowledge of radon levels in the home. If you have your radon test completed within your inspection time frame and the levels are at or above 4.0pCi/l, you can request the seller fix the problem or give you a credit to fix it. Because the seller will have to tell other potential buyers about the radon levels found, chances are the seller will end up fixing the radon for someone...it might as well be you.

Are you considering waiting?

If you are provided with the results of a previous test from the home make sure to request a full copy of the report. If the test is more than two years old, or if the test was not performed by a licensed technician, the home should be tested again with professional equipment and oversight. As homes age, how they breathe changes. A settling foundation, an aging or new furnace, a structural addition, or repaired roof can change the air flow dynamic, and therefore radon levels, in a home.

Maybe you've been lucky enough to find a home with a mitigation system already installed. Make sure that you have been provided the results of a professional post-mitigation test (dated within 2 years) to show that the system is working well and does not need adjustment to maintain the radon levels in an acceptable range. The gauge you see on the mitigation pipe is not an indicator of the radon levels in the home, but rather an indication of the pressure in the system. Do not assume that the presence of pressure in the system means the system is working properly.

Buying a home without testing for radon can cost you – both in terms of your health and your finances.

Radon is colorless, odorless, and tasteless.
It is present in all towns, in all homes– old or new, modest or grand, with or without basements.
The only way to know how much radon is present is to test.