



IEMA-OHS

ILLINOIS EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY
AND OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Radon Guide for Tenants



***The Illinois
Emergency
Management
Agency and
Office of of
Homeland
Security (IEMA
OHS) can offer
you additional
information or
assistance.***

Purpose of This Guide

This guide is designed for people who rent apartments, condominiums, or houses. The guide explains what radon is, and how to find out if there is a radon problem in your residence. The guide also talks about what you can do if you have high radon levels in your residence.

Did You Know That . . .

- Radon causes approximately 21,000 lung cancer deaths in the U.S. and approximately 1,200 deaths in Illinois each year.
- One-third of all housing units in Illinois are rental units. Most are either single-family houses or apartments located below the third floor of a building.
- People living in rented houses and apartment buildings can find out if they have high radon concentrations in their residences. Building owners can fix radon problems by having repairs made to the building.

What is Radon?

Radon is a radioactive gas that is found in soil and rock in all parts of the U.S. and throughout Illinois. It is formed by the decay of uranium, which is a natural process. Radon gas is invisible, and it has no odor or taste.

What Types of Buildings Contain Radon?

- Radon may be found in all types of homes and buildings. Radon gas is in the ground, and it can seep into buildings.
- Radon typically moves from the ground into a home through drains, cracks or other openings in the foundation due to pressure differentials. Radon then can be trapped inside the home.

How Does Radon Affect Health?

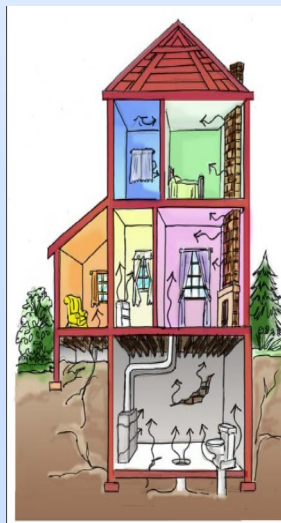
- Studies show radon is the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers.
- The higher the radon level indoors, the greater the amount you breathe. Radon gas decays into radioactive particles that can get trapped in your lungs when you breathe. As they break down, these particles release small bursts of energy that can damage the lung tissue.
- Inhaling indoor air containing radon over a period of many years increases your risk of lung cancer. Radon induced lung cancer risk depends on how much radon is in your home, how much time you spend in your home, and your family history. If you are a smoker or a former smoker, the risk of getting lung cancer from radon is even greater.

Does Your Home Have High Radon Levels?

You cannot see, smell or taste radon. Therefore, **testing** is the only way to determine the radon level in your home.

Has Your Building Been Tested Already?

- If the building you live in has been tested properly for radon, you probably do not need to test for radon yourself. Before you sign your lease agreement (whether you live in a house, apartment, or condominium building), the owner is required to inform you in writing that a radon hazard may exist and provide you with a copy of the test results. If you have questions, call IEMA-OHS at 1-800-325-1245.
- If your building has not been tested for radon, you can test for radon yourself using a radon test kit or ask the owner to test by hiring a licensed radon contractor.



IEMA-OHS Recommends Testing All Homes and Apartments

Because most indoor radon gas comes from naturally occurring radon in the soil, IEMA OHS recommends all residences be tested for radon.

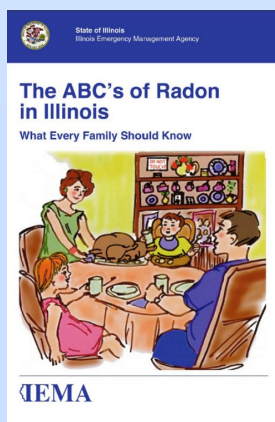
In some cases, high radon levels have been found on upper floors, due to radon movement through elevators or other air shafts in the building and may come from building materials in high rise buildings.

Can You Test for Radon Yourself?

- You can test for radon yourself.
- Testing for radon is easy to do, and takes very little time.
- To test for radon yourself, first obtain a radon test device. You can buy do-it-yourself radon test kits in home improvement and hardware stores. Some laboratories provide kits through mail order.
- The price of a radon test kit can be \$15 to \$25. The price generally includes the cost of laboratory analysis.
- You can order a low cost test kit from the IEMA-OHS Radon Hotline at 800-325-1245.

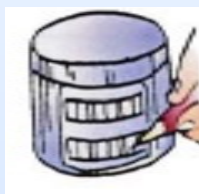
You Can Hire a Professional to Test?

- You can hire a professional to test your residence for radon.
- The price of a radon test performed by a license professional can be \$150 to \$250.



Different Ways to Test For Radon

- At the commencement of the agreed leasing period, a tenant shall have 90 days to conduct his or her own radon test of the dwelling unit.
- The quickest way to test for radon is with a short-term test. Short-term tests remain in your home for 2 days to 90 days, with the average test lasting between 2-7 days, depending on the device. Long-term radon tests remain in your residence for more than 90 days.
- Because radon levels vary from day to day and season to season, a long-term test provides a year-round average radon level.



How do you use a radon test kit?

Follow the instructions that come with the kit.

When you use any radon test:

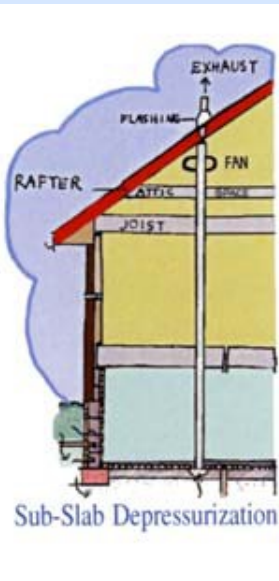
- The test kit should be placed in the lowest level of your home that your family uses regularly. For example, if you live in a house and you use the basement, place the test kit there. Put the test kit in a room that is used regularly, but NOT in your kitchen or bathroom.
- Keep the test in place for as long as the instructions say, but for at least 48 hours. Then, re-seal the package and mail it to the laboratory listed on the package. Results are sent within a few weeks.
- Keep doors and windows closed as much as possible during the test. Drafts can affect the test results.

What do radon test results mean?

- Radon levels are measured in "picocuries per liter" or "pCi/L". The higher the radon level, the greater the risk from long-term exposure. IEMA-OHS recommends you take action to reduce radon if the radon level is 4.0 pCi/L or higher.
- If a short-term test is 4.0 pCi/L or higher, IEMA recommends a second test to confirm the results.

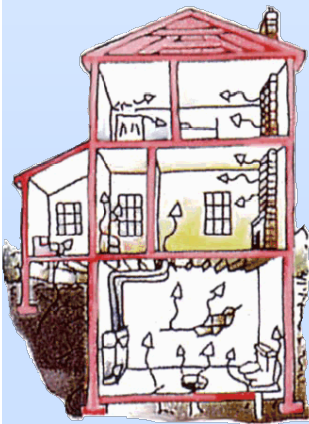
What Can You Do if Your Residence has High Radon Levels?

- Fixing a radon problem usually involves repairs to the building, therefore, it is generally the building owner - and not the tenant - who is authorized to have this work done. However, if your residence has high radon levels, you can take the steps below to see that the problem is fixed.
- If your radon testing shows high radon levels, the tenant is required to inform the lessor within 10 days. The owner may need choose to confirm radon concentrations in the building buy hiring a licensed professional.
- If the lessor has elected to not mitigated the radon hazard, the tenant may terminate the lease.
- If you live in an apartment building, you can share your radon information with other residents. Other residents may wish to test their own units or to discuss the matter further with the owner.



What Can Lessors Do About Radon Problems?

- The lessor may hire a radon contractor to perform an additional radon test within 30 days after the tenant notifies the lessor of the results of a radon test.
- The results of a measurement by a radon contractor may be used by the lessor to disprove the presence of a radon hazard.
- Test results are valid for a period of 2 years after the date of the testing unless any renovations, additions, or modifications are made to the building containing the dwelling unit.
- If the lessor declines to dispute the results of the tenant's radon test showing a radon hazard or does not mitigate the hazard, the tenant may, within 60 days:
 - (1) hire, at the tenant's expense, a radon contractor to perform radon mitigation activities. If the tenant chooses to conduct mitigation activities, the mitigation activities shall only be done with express consent of the lessor; or
 - (2) terminate the lease.
- Radon reduction requires a trained professional. To find out which radon reduction system is right for a building, and the cost of repairs, Lessors should consult with a licensed radon contractor.



Tenant's Radon Checklist



- At the time of entering into a lease, or at any time during the leasing period, upon request, the lessor shall provide to a tenant in a unit below the third story with:
 - (1) the IEMA-OHS pamphlet Radon Guide for Tenants;
 - (2) copies of any records or reports pertaining to radon concentrations within the dwelling unit that indicate a radon hazard; and
 - (3) the Disclosure of Information on Radon Hazards to Tenants form.
- Follow instructions included in your radon test kit.
- If your test shows radon levels above 4.0 pCi/L, notify the Lessor of the test results in writing within 10 days.
- If you have high radon levels or if you need additional information and assistance about radon testing and radon repairs, contact the IEMA radon office, the National Radon Helpline or other organizations that work on radon or housing issues.

If You Smoke . . .

Smoking combined with exposure to high radon levels is a serious health risk. If you smoke or are a former smoker, the presence of radon greatly increases your risk of lung cancer. If you stop smoking and lower your radon levels, you will reduce your lung cancer risk.

For More Information
IEMA-OHS Website
www.radon.illinois.gov
IEMA Toll-free Hotline
1-800-325-1245