



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

ROD BLAGOJEVICH - GOVERNOR

# NEWS

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## **Governor Blagojevich Urges People to Test Homes During Radon Action Month**

***IEMA study finds that 42 percent of homes tested in Illinois  
had excess levels of cancer-causing radon***

SPRINGFIELD – Citing a state study that shows 42 percent of homes tested in Illinois had excess levels of radon, Governor Rod R. Blagojevich today urged people to test their homes for the cancer-causing radioactive gas during Radon Action Month in January. The study, conducted by the Illinois Emergency Management Agency, examined results from nearly 72,000 home tests conducted by professional contractors and homeowners between 2003 – 2007.

“Radon is the second-leading cause of lung cancer overall, but it’s the leading cause of lung cancer for non-smokers,” said Governor Blagojevich. “Fortunately, it’s a health risk that can be reduced by testing your home for radon, and taking action if the levels are too high. I urge everyone in Illinois to take a few moments in January to do a radon home test.”

Radon is a colorless, odorless, tasteless radioactive gas that comes from the radioactive decay of naturally occurring uranium in the soil. It can enter homes and buildings through small cracks in the foundation, sump pumps or soil in crawlspaces. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) has determined that radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the nation, behind smoking. However, among non-smokers, radon is the leading cause of cancer.

The National Academy of Sciences and the Surgeon General estimate that 21,000 radon-related lung cancer deaths occur annually in the United States, as many as 1,100 of those in Illinois.

Illinois Emergency Management Agency’s (IEMA) Radon program staff analyzed results from nearly 72,000 home radon tests conducted by professional contractors and homeowners from 2003-2007. Twenty-four counties had more than 50 percent of the homes tested with radon levels greater than 4 picocuries per liter of air (pCi/L), the USEPA recommended action level. In another 34 counties, between 25-50 percent of the homes tested above that level. The remaining 44 counties had too few tests to provide a good picture of the radon potential in that area.

In a previous radon study released in September 2006, IEMA reported that 46 percent of more than 22,000 homes tested by professional radon measurement contractors in 2003 and 2004 had potentially unsafe levels of radon.

“As we found in our earlier report, this new study shows that close to half of the homes tested in Illinois have excessive radon levels,” said IEMA Director Andrew Velasquez III. “While virtually all homes will have some amount of radon, there’s no way to know if your home has hazardous levels unless you test.”

During Radon Action Month, IEMA is offering 10,000 free radon test kits to encourage people to test their homes. Requests for the test kits can be submitted through IEMA’s Radon website at [www.radon.illinois.gov](http://www.radon.illinois.gov) or by calling the radon hotline at 1-800-325-1245. Test kits can also be purchased at local hardware and department stores. In addition, professional radon measurement contractors are licensed by IEMA to conduct radon tests. A list of measurement contractors by county is also available on the Radon website.

Velasquez said anyone who discovers their home has elevated levels of radon to contact a licensed radon mitigation professional to correct the problem. As with radon measurement professionals, mitigation experts in Illinois are licensed by IEMA to ensure they have the proper equipment, specialized training and technical skills to do the job right and reduce radon in the home to safe levels. Depending on the home, radon mitigation can cost between \$800-1,200.

As a life-long non-smoker, Barb Sorgatz of Glen Ellyn was surprised in 2007 when a CT scan following a gall bladder attack detected lung cancer. Through research on the Internet, Sorgatz learned that radon is the leading cause of lung cancer in healthy people who have never smoked.

“When I tested my home for radon, I was surprised to learn the levels were five times the recommended USEPA levels,” said Sorgatz. “I hired a licensed contractor to install a radon mitigation system that lowered the radon levels in my home to a safe level.”

Since Jan. 1, 2007, when the Illinois Radon Awareness Act took effect, home sellers are required to provide buyers with information about indoor radon exposure and the fact that radon is the leading cause of lung cancer in non-smokers and the second leading cause overall. The law doesn’t require that homes be tested for radon prior to the sale or that radon remediation work be conducted if test results show high levels of radon. However, if a radon test has been conducted on the home those results must be provided to the buyer.

“Because radon is the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers, the American Lung Association of Illinois encourages all homeowners to test their homes for it,” said Harold Wimmer, CEO of the American Lung Association of Illinois. “Americans spend about 87 percent of their time indoors, and the USEPA estimates that about a quarter of all radon-related lung cancers could be averted by lowering radon levels in homes to below 4 pCi/L of air.”

## **Radon survey county summary**

### **Counties with more than 50 percent of homes with radon levels greater than 4 pCi/L**

Adams	Jo Daviess	Morgan	Stark
Carroll	Knox	Ogle	Stephenson
Champaign	Livingston	Peoria	Tazewell
DeWitt	Marshall	Piatt	Warren
Fulton	McLean	Rock Island	Whiteside
Henry	Mercer	Sangamon	Woodford

### **Counties with 25-50 percent of homes tested with radon levels greater than 4 pCi/L**

Boone	Edgar	Lee	Montgomery
Bureau	Effingham	Logan	Moultrie
Christian	Grundy	Macon	Shelby
Clark	Iroquois	Macoupin	St. Clair
Clinton	Kane	Madison	Union
Coles	Kankakee	McDonough	Will
Cook	Kendall	McHenry	Winnebago
DeKalb	Lake	Menard	
DuPage	LaSalle	Monroe	

### **Counties with less than 25 percent of homes tested with radon levels greater than 4 pCi/L**

None

### **Counties with too few tests between January 2003-December 2007 to provide a good picture of the radon potential in that area**

Alexander	Ford	Jersey	Randolph
Bond	Franklin	Johnson	Richland
Brown	Gallatin	Lawrence	Saline
Calhoun	Greene	Marion	Schuyler
Cass	Hamilton	Mason	Scott
Clay	Hancock	Massac	Vermilion
Crawford	Hardin	Perry	Wabash
Cumberland	Henderson	Pike	Washington
Douglas	Jackson	Pope	Wayne
Edwards	Jasper	Pulaski	White
Fayette	Jefferson	Putnam	Williamson