

Radon in Iowa



What is radon?

Radon is a colorless, odorless, tasteless, radioactive gas that is produced from the decay of naturally occurring uranium in the soil. When this gas enters buildings and is breathed in, decay products damage lung tissue **and can result in lung cancer. There is no safe level of radon.**

Where is radon found?

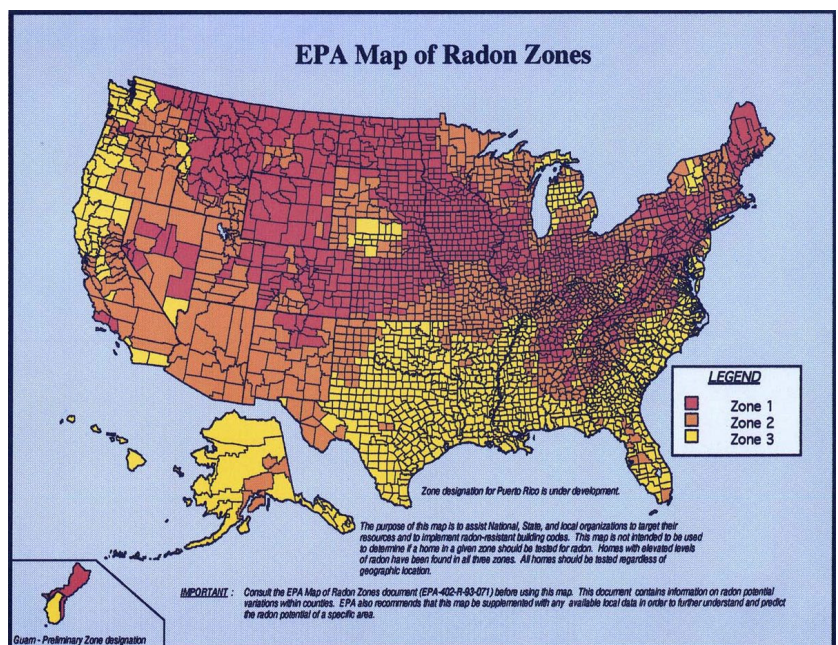
Radon can be found anywhere. Levels in the exterior environment are typically very low. However, due to pressure differentials, levels in indoor environments may be dangerously high. The age, type of foundation or location of a house are not indicators of radon gas levels. The only way to know the level of radon gas in any building is to perform a test.

Who is at risk?

Everyone is at risk for developing lung cancer from exposure to radon gas. To date, there is no evidence that age or overall health influences this risk.

What is the risk in Iowa?

- An estimated **400 deaths per year** in Iowa are caused by radon-induced lung cancer. This is about the same number of annual deaths seen in Iowa due to traffic fatalities.
- US EPA surveys in Iowa have found that **7 in 10 homes** contain radon concentrations above the US EPA's radon action level of 4 picoCuries/Liter (pCi/L).
- Iowa leads the nation in the percent of homes over the 4 pCi/L as well as percent of homes over 20 pCi/L.
- The average indoor radon concentration in Iowa is more than six times the national average.
- All of Iowa is located in Zone 1 (red) indicating that **Iowans have a very high potential for elevated levels of radon gas.**



How do I test for radon?

Radon is not detectable with human senses. However, **testing is easy to perform and low cost.** Radon tests are characterized as either short-term or long-term. Short-term tests require 2-90 days and are especially affordable. Short-term tests can be purchased at most hardware stores, and from the American Lung Association by calling (800) 383-5992. Long-term tests require 90 days to one year, and can be purchased at some hardware stores, from manufacturer web sites, and from the American Lung Association by calling (800) 383-5992.

A list of licensed radon measurement professionals is also available from the Iowa Radon Program at www.idph.state.ia.us/eh/radon.asp.

How do I take care of a radon problem?

The cost of a radon mitigation system installed by a certified contractor is comparable to the price of other home improvements/maintenance, ranging from \$1000-\$2000, depending on the characteristics of the home and choice of radon reduction method.

A list of local licensed radon mitigation professionals is available from the Iowa Radon Program at www.idph.state.ia.us/eh/radon.asp.

American Lung Association in Iowa

(800) 788-5864

www.lungia.org

Iowa Radon Program

Licensing and mitigation installation standards information:

Visit www.idph.state.ia.us/eh/radon.asp or call (515) 281-4928.



American Cancer Society
American Lung Association
Heartland Chapter of AARST
Iowa Cancer Consortium
Iowa Department of Public Health - Radon Program
Iowa Department of Public Health - Comprehensive Cancer Control Program
Johnson County Public Health
Learning Without Limits: Alpha Eliminators
Mallon Construction
MB Radon Service
Mercy Cancer Center
Proteus, Inc.
Respiratory Health Association of Metropolitan Chicago
University of Iowa College of Public Health
University of Iowa Holden Comprehensive Cancer Center