

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Radon Gas as the #1 In-home Hazard

A recent study by Harvard University ranked radon as America's #1 in-home hazard. By taking a few simple steps to test your home for radon and fix if necessary, this health hazard can be avoided.

Radon is one of the densest substances that will remain a gas under normal conditions. Yet, you can't see, smell or taste radon. This gas contains radioactive particles which, as they break down, can damage the cells that line the lungs and lead to lung cancer. It is currently estimated that each year 10% of all lung cancer deaths are directly attributable to radon exposure.

Radon is measured in "picocuries per liter of air," or "pCi/L.". While no level of radon is considered safe, EPA recommends that action be taken when indoor air levels are 4 pCi/L or greater. Branch, Hillsdale and St. Joseph counties are located in an area known to have the highest recorded levels of radon in the state, so testing is critical. To assist you in testing your home, the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency offers free charcoal radon test kits. One charcoal kit is all you need to test your home for radon.

According to Rebecca Burns, Environmental Health Director "Testing is easy and should only take a few minutes of your time. The homeowner, following the directions, places the test kit in the lowest level of the home where people spend time. After no less than 3 days but no more than 7, the owner records the start and end times for the test on the enclosed form and returns the test kit to the testing company using the self-

addressed, prepaid package. In as little as 10 to 14 business days later, he/she will receive back their test results.” Rebecca went on to add “Of course, its important that during the testing period, outside doors and windows are kept closed as much as possible. That’s why late fall and winter are optimal times to conduct tests.”

If radon levels are found to be high (4 pCi/L or greater), levels can be safely reduced at a minimal cost to homeowners. For example, by having a certified radon mitigator install a vent pipe system with a fan, radon can be pulled away from beneath the house and vented safely outside. A listing of certified radon mitigators can be found at www.michigan.gov/radon. New homes can also be built with radon-resistant features.

To learn more about radon and why you should test your home, please visit the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency’s website: <http://www.bhsj.org> and click on Frequently Asked Questions Sheets – Radon link.

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