

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: 12/20/2018

CONTACT: Chris Klawuhn, R.S., M.S.A.
TITLE: Environmental Health Services Director
PHONE: (989) 758-3684
EMAIL: cklawuhn@saginawcounty.com

JANUARY 2019 IS RADON ACTION MONTH

Chris Klawuhn, Saginaw County Environmental Health Director, announced today that the Saginaw County Health Department is distributing free radon test kits during the month of January in recognition of Radon Action Month. He encourages area residents to get a kit and test their home during the coming heating season and, if necessary, to take action to reduce their exposure to this tasteless, odorless, colorless, radioactive gas.

Stating that some area residents may be at risk of developing lung cancer from exposure to elevated levels of radon gas in their homes, Klawuhn said, "We are encouraging Saginaw County residents to stop by the health department and pick up a radon test kit, and more importantly, to use that kit during the coming heating season."

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States, surpassed only by cigarette smoking, and it is a significant environmental health threat that can be easily detected. When elevated radon levels are found, residents should confirm the measurements with additional testing, and then take action to reduce the levels in their homes.

Radon occurs naturally in soil and rock, but being a gas, it can move upward through the soil and it enters buildings through cracks and openings in the foundation floor or walls. Typical entry points include floor/wall joints, sump openings, crawlspaces, cracks in the floor, and other penetrations caused by plumbing, wiring, or ductwork. Outdoors, it is diluted by the atmosphere,

but indoors it tends to be more concentrated and can accumulate to unhealthy levels. Klawuhn is quick to add that “the only way to know if your home has an elevated radon level is to test your home.”

"Because radon is invisible and can't be smelled, it's easy to ignore," Klawuhn said. "It doesn't cause headaches, nausea, fatigue, skin rashes, or other warning symptoms that might be experienced as a result of exposure to many other environmental toxins, yet extended exposure to elevated radon levels may increase one's risk of lung cancer, a generally fatal disease."

EPA estimates that radon is responsible for more than 21,000 deaths in the U.S. each year, and about 2,900 of these deaths occur among people who have never smoked. Nearly one in eight homes in Michigan has elevated radon levels. Of the homes tested in Saginaw County so far, 15% had elevated radon levels.

While your neighbor's test results may provide some indication of the potential for a problem in your home, radon levels can vary significantly from lot to lot and home to home. Don't rely on your neighbor's test results to determine your risk. Test your own home and be certain!

Testing is easy and inexpensive, Klawuhn says. The do-it-yourself test kits distributed by the health department are normally available for \$10.00, and that includes postage back to an out-of-state lab, as well as the fees for having the device analyzed and a report sent back to the consumer. Free kits are available through January 31st in Room 101 at the Saginaw County Department of Public Health, 1600 N. Michigan Avenue in Saginaw. Kits are also available at the Rehmann Health Center, 147 S. Saginaw Street in Chesaning.

For more information, call Environmental Health Services at (989) 758-3686 or visit www.saginawpublichealth.org. The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality also has a toll-free number at 1-800-RADON GAS (1-800-723-6642). For information on your risk of developing lung cancer due to radon exposure, whether you are a smoker or non-smoker, visit the EPA's website at <https://www.epa.gov/radon/health-risk-radon>.

END