

Radon kits available to Calif. residents

The California Department of Public Health is offering free radon test kits to households in California throughout the month of January, or until supplies run out.

Radon is a naturally occurring, odorless, colorless, and tasteless radioactive gas, which results from the decay of uranium or thorium naturally present in soil and bedrock. Low levels of uranium occur widely in Earth's crust and it can be found in all 50 states. Radon gas enters a house the same way air and other soil gases enter: from the soil around and under the home and through cracks in the foundation, floor or walls; hollow-block walls; and openings around floor drains, pipes and sump pumps. Radon has been detected in new and old homes, with and without basements. Homes with high radon levels can be fixed with simple and well-established venting techniques, reducing levels in the home by up to 99 percent.

Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States, according to the Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion for Disease Control and Prevention. Exposure to elevated levels of radon increases the risk of lung cancer; the longer the exposure, the greater the risk. Because it cannot be seen or smelled, the only way to determine the radon level in a home is to test for its presence.

Limited test kits are available at Environmental Management's South Lake Tahoe office; call 530.573.3450 for availability.