

**Q. What is radon?**

A. Radon is a colorless, odorless, naturally occurring, inert radioactive gas that is the only gaseous element of the long, uranium-238 radioactive decay chain. Uranium is a common component of soil around the world.

**Q. How do you test for radon?**

A. The only way to learn of the presence of radon is to use an instrument or device that is designed to measure or detect it. (See the [Guide to Home Environment Radon Measurements](#); or if you are in a real estate transaction, see the [Radon Testing Guidelines for Real Estate Transactions](#).)

**Q. I want to test my own house. Where do I place the detectors?**

A. The Illinois Emergency Management Agency, Department of Nuclear & Radiation Safety recommends that residents test like the professionals do. Place two detectors in each lowest structural area suitable for occupancy. For instance, if your house includes a basement, an area over a slab, and an area over a crawlspace, TEST in at least one room in each area. The HIGHEST radon level in your home may not be in your basement.

**Q. Where can I buy radon detectors?**

A. Radon detectors are available at area hardware and home improvement stores. If you can't find them there, check the List of Laboratories on the [IEMA website](#).

**Q. It is indicated after two tests that I have high levels of radon. What do I do now?**

A. There are several means for reducing indoor radon levels, but the most often used and practical method is known as sub-slab depressurization. (See the [Guide to Radon Mitigation](#).) The Department recommends hiring a professional mitigator from the List of Licensed Mitigation Professional, on the DNS/Radon Information website.

**Q. I'm in a real estate transaction, what do I need to know about radon mitigation?**

A. First, unless the seller has committed, in an executed contract, to paying for the installation of the radon mitigation system, there is nothing to require it. Your real estate agent probably knows several mitigation contractors in your area and may offer to arrange the mitigation with a favorite contractor. However, rushing to complete the mitigation prior to closing should be avoided.

Second, seller and buyer can negotiate the installation costs. For instance, the buyer may want extras, such as a decorative chase that blends with the exterior of the home. Or, in very cold areas, the buyer may want an insulated chase to ensure that the system doesn't freeze up in extremely cold weather. The costs may be

equitably shared - with the seller paying the basics and the buyer paying for the extras. The Department suggests escrowing money for the mitigation and taking an active part in the choice of a mitigation contractor. Proposals should be received from several mitigation contractors; referrals checked, and the contract/ warranty fully understood prior to beginning the installation.

**Q. Should I test the soil for radon before I build?**

A. Generally speaking, no. Such tests are very expensive and do not correlate well with radon measurements performed after the house is completed and functioning. What you can do, is tell your architect (or builder) that you want a passive radon reduction system designed into your house plan. It's better to include the system in the original design, but a system can be retrofitted into an existing house plan just as one can be retrofitted into an existing structure. Installation during construction will save you \$400 - \$900 on activation, should your post move-in radon test be at or above the Action Level, 4.0 picocuries per liter of air (pCi/L). Although your builder may install a passive radon reduction system without being licensed, activation of that system must be performed by a licensed mitigation professional. (See the DNS brochure Passive Radon Reduction Systems in new residential construction for a summary of construction requirements.)