

Radon: An Invisible Risk in Our Homes

January 2026

Radon is a colorless, odorless, and tasteless radioactive gas that forms naturally from the decay of uranium in soil and rock. Because it cannot be detected by human senses, many people are unaware of its presence. Yet radon is a serious public health concern, particularly here in Minnesota.

You can't see, smell, or taste radon, but it can still harm your health.

Outdoors, radon is diluted by open air and natural air movement. Indoors, however, it can become trapped and build up to dangerous levels, especially in tightly sealed homes.

Radon is the 2nd leading cause of lung cancer overall and the leading cause among non-smokers.

Why Radon Is a Serious Health Concern

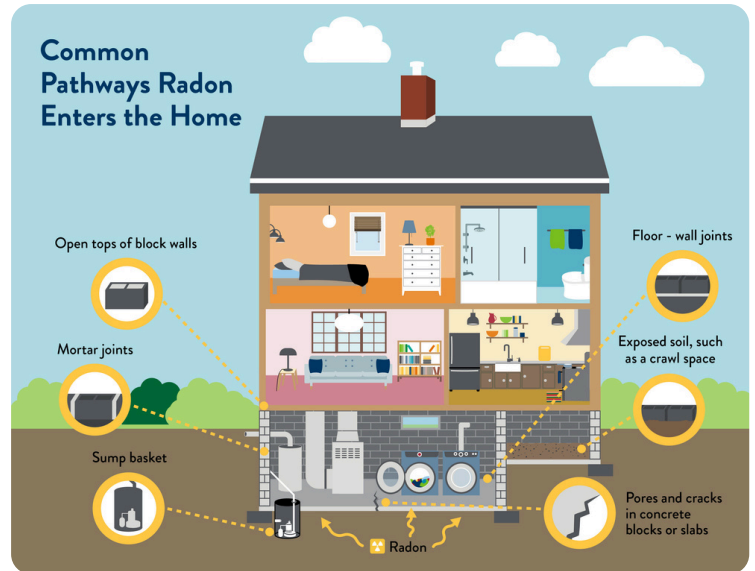
When radon gas breaks down, it decays into other radioactive elements such as polonium, lead, and bismuth. During this process, alpha radiation is released, while the decay byproducts emit beta and gamma radiation. When inhaled, the radiation emitted by the particles is absorbed by the lungs.

The radiation energy damages the DNA of lung cells. Over time, repeated damage increases the likelihood that cells may become cancerous.

Any radon level carries some risk, but higher levels increase the danger.

Why Radon is a Problem in MN

- **Higher Risk:** Minnesota has radon levels more than **3** times higher than the U.S. average due to its geology and climate.
- **Closed Homes:** Homes in Minnesota are sealed up or heated for much of the year, trapping radon inside.



How Radon Enters the Home

Radon commonly enters through:

- Cracks in foundations and basement floors
- Gaps around pipes and utility lines
- Construction joints and floor drains
- Crawl spaces and porous materials

Radon is most concentrated in the lowest lived-in level of a home. **Basements and lower levels are the most important places to test.**

Testing Your Home for Radon

The only way to know your radon level is to test. Testing is simple and affordable.

Test the lowest level that is regularly used, especially areas where you spend 10 or more hours per week.

Radon test kits are available at hardware stores, home improvement centers, large retailers, and online.

First Test

(Start with a short-term test)

Result (pCi/L)	Action
0 - 1.9	Retest every 2 – 5 years with a short-term test
2 - 7.9	Perform a follow-up long-term test
8 or greater	Perform a follow-up short-term test

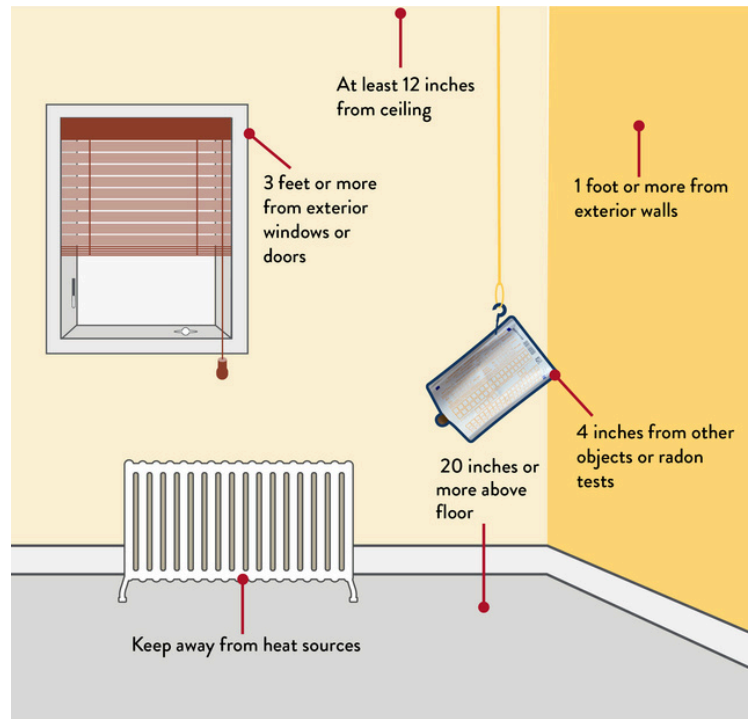
Radon Levels in Our Region

Testing data shows actionable levels (4 pCi/L or more) across our area:

Percentage of Homes

- **Douglas County:** 61.6%
- **Pope County:** 50.5%
- **Stevens County:** 60.7%
- **Grant County:** 66.4%
- **Traverse County:** 62.8%

By comparison, the national average is about 6–7% (1 in 15 homes).



When to Take Action

Radon is measured in picocuries per liter (pCi/L).

- **4.0 pCi/L or higher:** Install a radon mitigation system.
- **2.0–4.0 pCi/L:** Consider lowering levels as much as possible.

Mitigation systems are proven to significantly reduce radon and protect health.

Finding Help and Resources

The Minnesota Department of Health provides a list of licensed radon mitigation professionals, along with tips and questions to ask:

[Find a Radon Mitigation Professional](#)

Horizon Public Health can also assist with test kits and guidance.



Get a Test Kit Today!



800.450.4177 or 320.763.6018



horizonphmn.gov

