Radon: Know the Numbers When You Buy or Sell a House

Radon Tipsheet #3

April 2019

Living in a home with high radon levels is a major risk for lung cancer.

Radon is the 2nd leading cause of lung cancer. It occurs naturally in Maine soil and water, and can move up into a house from the ground. The house then traps the radon in the air inside. Radon gas can also dissolve into well water, which is then released into the air when you use the water. Simple air and well water tests can show whether home radon levels meet state and national safety guidelines.

When you buy or sell a house, test air and well water for radon.

Any house can have a radon problem. It doesn't matter if it's old or new, or where it's located.

- If you are **buying** a house, you have the right to ask for radon air and well water tests as part of a purchase agreement.
- If you are **selling** a house, it's wise to expect these requests. When a house is being sold, if a radon test is done, Maine law requires testing to be done by a registered radon tester. This helps assure that the test is done right.

To find and work with a registered radon tester:

- **www.MaineRadiationControl.org**
  1-800-232-0842
- Use Tipsheet #5 *Working with a Registered Radon Tester.*

If radon was tested before the house was put up for sale, the buyer should ask for test results and the seller must disclose those results. Use the Tipsheet, Working with a Registered Radon Tester, to understand test procedures. If results are more than 2 years old, new tests should be done.

If you are building a new house, see Tipsheet #4 *When You Build a New Home.*

Radon test results can help you plan next steps.

Air Test Results. If your air test number is:

- **4 or higher** – You need a treatment system.
- **Between 2 and 4** – maybe treat
  Call us to discuss: 1-800-232-0842.
- **Below 2** and you tested in cold weather with the heat on—retest in 3 to 5 years. If you tested in warmer weather when heat is off, test again in cold weather when heat is on.

Water Test Results. If your well water number is:

- **10,000 or higher** – You need a treatment system.
- **Between 4,000 and 10,000** – maybe treat
  Call us to discuss: 1-800-232-0842.
- **4,000 or lower** – Retest in 3 to 5 years.

If both air and well water tests are done, the results must be considered together to decide on the best and most cost effective fix. For advice about what to do, call state experts tollfree in Maine: 1-800-232-0842.

Radon problems can be fixed.

Current methods make it possible to get air levels in most houses to around 2 or below, and well water levels to 4000 or below. If air levels are between 2 and 4, it may cost extra to get down to 2 or below.

Be sure the sale/purchase contract states costs and conditions for fixing any problem.

Protect your family. Learn. Test. Treat if needed.

- Check this website: **www.MaineRadiationControl.org**
- For advice: **1-800-232-0842 • radon.dhhs@maine.gov • TTY: 800-606-0215**