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DEP Finds Record Radon Level in Home, Encourages All Pennsylvania Residents to Test for This Radioactive Gas

Wilkes-Barre, PA – The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has detected a new record-high level of radon and is once again encouraging state residents to test their homes for this radioactive gas, a leading cause of lung cancer.

In October, a home in southern Lehigh County showed a radon level of 6,176 picocuries per liter (pCi/L), the highest recorded in the state. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has set an action level for radon concentration in homes at 4 pCi/L. Homes testing above this level should have a radon reduction system installed.

“We encourage people to buy a radon home test kit and take the steps necessary to protect themselves and their families,” said DEP Acting Secretary Patrick McDonnell. “Fall and winter are an ideal time to test, because the gas becomes trapped inside when doors and windows are closed.”

Radon is a colorless, odorless, radioactive gas that occurs naturally through the breakdown of uranium in soil and rocks. It can enter a home through cracks in the foundation or other openings.

The National Toxicology Program, comprising the National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Food and Drug Administration, classifies radon as a [known human carcinogen](#). Scientists estimate that about 20,000 lung cancer deaths yearly are related to radon. It's the leading cause of lung cancer in nonsmokers and second leading cause in smokers.

Because of its geology, Pennsylvania is prone to high radon levels. Radon has been detected in all 67 counties, and about 40 percent of homes in the state have levels above EPA's action level. In 2014, a number of homes in the southern Lehigh County area were found to have radon levels over 1,000 pCi/L. That area is near the Reading Prong, a

geological section of granite rock that historically has generated high levels of radon.

Testing is the only way to know if a home, school, workplace or other structure has elevated levels of radon. An easy home test kit can be purchased at hardware or home improvement stores for about \$20 to \$30. People may also hire a state-certified testing company.

If a level above 4 pCi/L is found, a radon mitigation, or reduction, system should be installed. This is essentially a pipe with a fan to suction the gas from the ground and discharge it above the roofline, where the radon is dispersed. DEP recommends that home builders install radon reduction systems during construction.

DEP certifies all radon testers, mitigators and laboratories doing business in the state, to ensure reliable results.

For more information, including information on interpreting radon test results and finding a Pennsylvania-certified radon contractor, visit the [DEP Radon Division website](#) or call 800-23-RADON (800-237-2366).