



homeforward

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Frequently Asked Questions

Radon

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Radon: General Questions

What is radon?

Radon is a radioactive gas found in soil and rock that you cannot see, smell, or taste.

Where does radon occur?

According to the [National Cancer Institute](#):

Radon is present in nearly all air. Everyone breathes in radon every day, usually at very low levels. However, people who inhale elevated levels of radon are at an increased risk of developing lung cancer. Radon can enter homes through cracks in floors, walls, or foundations, and collect indoors. It can also be released from building materials, or from water obtained from wells that contain radon. Radon levels can be higher in homes that are well insulated, tightly sealed, and/or built on soil rich in the elements uranium, thorium, and radium. Basement and first floors typically have the highest radon levels because of their closeness to the ground.

Why can radon be dangerous to human health?

According to the [American Cancer Society](#):

Being exposed to radon for a long period of time can lead to lung cancer. Radon gas in the air breaks down into tiny radioactive elements (radon progeny) that can lodge in the lining of the lungs, where they can give off radiation. This radiation can damage lung cells and eventually lead to lung cancer.

Are there other health effects of radon?

According to the [Oregon Health Authority](#):

Breathing radon does not cause any short-term human health symptoms such as shortness of breath, coughing, headaches, or fever. There is no conclusive evidence that children are at a greater risk than adults from radon. Currently, there is also no conclusive evidence that radon exposure leads to increased risk of contracting other cancers or diseases.

If I smoke tobacco, should I be especially concerned?

According to the [Oregon Health Authority](#):

Yes. Only smoking causes more lung cancer deaths than radon. If you smoke and your home has elevated radon levels, your risk of lung cancer is especially elevated.

Visit [The Risk of Living with Radon](#), found in EPA's A Citizen's Guide to Radon, to see risk comparison of smoking and radon.

Can people be tested or screened for radon exposure?

According to the [Oregon Health Authority](#):

At this time, Oregon Health Authority (OHA) is not aware of any standard medical screenings that determine lung damage related to radon exposure. The best way to find out your risk of radon exposure is to test your home.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) does provide [information on screening tests that are available for lung cancer](#). It is recommended for those who have a history of smoking and are between the ages of 55-80 years old.

What is a safe level of Radon?

According to the [Environmental Protection Agency](#):

Radon is measured in picocuries per liter of air (pCi/L), a measurement of radioactivity. In the United States, the average indoor radon level is about 1.3 pCi/L.

The average outdoor level is about 0.4 pCi/L. The U.S. Surgeon General and EPA recommend fixing homes with radon levels at or above 4 pCi/L. EPA also recommends that people think about fixing their homes for radon levels between 2 pCi/L and 4 pCi/L.

What if I am worried about my health or the health of my family?

If you are worried about your health, or the health of someone in your family, please talk to your doctor.

Radon: What is Home Forward doing to address it?

Does the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) require Home Forward to test for and address Radon in its housing?

In 2013 HUD issued guidance recommending Radon testing but HUD does not have any specific requirements for testing of public housing properties. Further, HUD does not provide Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) with additional resources to test for Radon or address elevated levels if they are found.

Why did Home Forward decide to begin testing for Radon?

Home Forward started testing for radon in groups of public housing buildings that were scheduled for significant rehabilitation. When Home Forward found elevated levels of Radon in some of those buildings, they originally included the Radon remediation in the overall construction process. As they continued to find Radon in other buildings, they adjusted their process and are now proactively testing and remediating as quickly as possible.

Does HUD require Home Forward to have a Radon policy?

No, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) does not require Home Forward to have a radon policy.

Does Home Forward have a Radon policy?

Yes. You can download a copy of Home Forward's Radon Policy here:
(<http://www.homeforward.org/RadonInfo>)

Has Home Forward made any recent changes to its Radon Policy?

Yes - in response to feedback from some Home Forward residents, Home Forward has recently made some changes to its Radon Policy. Previously, Home Forward notified residents of Radon test results at the same time that residents were notified if radon levels were elevated and professional services to address elevated levels were scheduled.

Some residents expressed that they would prefer to know their test results from Home Forward as soon as possible, rather than when services to address elevated levels have been scheduled, so they can take steps to address elevated levels in their homes in the meantime.

Going forward, Home Forward will notify residents within 30 business days of receiving test results and will include information about steps that residents can take to improve the air quality in their home while services to address those levels are scheduled.

Has Home Forward tested for Radon in my home?

Home Forward is in the process of testing and addressing any elevated radon levels in all of its public housing and has a plan to test and address elevated Radon levels in all of its affordable housing buildings.

If you are interested in information about a specific property, please visit Home Forward's Radon Information webpage (<http://www.HomeForward.org/RadonInfo>) for a complete list of our properties and the work that has been completed at those properties to date.

When will Home Forward be done testing and addressing elevated levels of Radon?

Home Forward will complete testing, and addressing elevated Radon levels where necessary, for all of its properties by the following dates:

- Public Housing: December 30, 2020
- Affordable Housing/Tax Credit Properties: December 30, 2023

If you are interested in information about a specific property, please visit Home Forward's Radon Information webpage (<http://www.HomeForward.org/RadonInfo>) for a complete list of our properties and the work that has been completed at those properties to date.

When testing, does Home Forward test every unit for Radon?

When testing for Radon, Home Forward contracts with certified professionals who follow national best practices for testing and addressing elevated levels of radon in multifamily buildings. These standards are set by the American Association of Radon Scientists and Technologists, Protocol for Conducting Radon and Radon Decay Product Measurement in Multifamily buildings (ANSI-AARST MAMF). Home Forward follows these high standards.

These standards require professionals to test every unit on the ground floor of a building, and to test a sampling of 10 percent of all units on every upper floor (at least one unit per floor).

Radon: What steps can you take?

If I want to test my home, how can I get an inexpensive Radon test kit?

According to the Oregon Healthy Authority:

Kits can be found at hardware stores for \$10 to \$30. Check and see if the cost of the analysis is included in the test kit price. Some test kits charge for analysis in addition. You can also find test kits at either of the following:

The [American Lung Association \(ALA\) of the Mountain Pacific](#) sells a short-term (ST) kit for \$15 and a long-term (LT) kit for \$38.50. You can order online or by phone at 503-718-6141.

The [National Radon Program Services at Kansas State University \(sosradon.org\)](http://sosradon.org) has short-term kits available for \$15 and long-term kits available for \$25 online.

What will Home Forward do if I test my home and find elevated levels of Radon?

Home Forward is in the process of professionally testing and addressing elevated levels of Radon where they are found in every build we own. We expect this work to be completed in all public housing by the end of 2020 and in all affordable housing and tax credit buildings by the end of 2023.

There are a limited number of certified professionals in the area who test and fix elevated Radon levels. We are working to get them to each property as quickly as possible.

What can I do to improve the indoor air quality of my home?

For more information about how to improve the indoor air quality of your home, please visit (<http://www.homeforward.org/RadonInfo>).