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January is National Radon Month

JACKSON COUNTY, MI – January is National Radon Action Month, and the Jackson County Health Department encourages all residents to test their homes and buildings for radon gas.

What is Radon, and Where Does Radon Come From? Radon is a radioactive gas that cannot be seen or smelled. The natural decay of uranium and radium in soil and rock creates it. Radon can leak into buildings through cracks or gaps in basement walls, ground floors, and crawlspaces. Found throughout the United States, radon levels vary significantly by location.

Key Facts about Radon:

- Radon is the second-leading cause of lung cancer in the United States, and the leading cause of lung cancer among people who don't smoke.
- Jackson County is a Zone 1 County, which means the average radon levels within buildings are expected to be above the Environmental Protection Agency's recommended action level of 4.0 pCi/L (picoCuries per Liter).
- Testing is the only way to know if radon levels are too high in a building. The EPA recommends testing a building, regardless of age, for radon every two years.

How Does Radon Affect Health? Radon is the second-leading cause of lung cancer, behind smoking.

- Prolonged exposure to high radon levels increases the risk of lung cancer.
- When radon gas decays, it releases radioactive particles that damage lung cells, potentially leading to lung cancer over time.
- If you are a smoker or a former smoker, the risk of developing lung cancer from inhaling radon is higher.

What Types of Buildings Contain Radon?

- Radon can infiltrate all building types, regardless of age, how well the building is sealed, or whether the building has a basement.
- Radon normally moves into a building through openings in the walls or floors, which can include drains, cracks, or other holes in the foundation. Radon then becomes trapped inside the building and can rise to unhealthy levels.
- Radon levels can fluctuate over time and from season to season due to weather and building design. Radon levels, on average, tend to be slightly higher in winter than in summer.

How Do You Fix a Building with a High Radon Level?

- The primary method to reduce radon in a building is installing a vent pipe system and fan that pulls and collects radon gas from beneath the building and vents it to the outside. This system, known as an **active soil depressurization system**, does not require major changes to a building.
- Sealing openings, such as foundation cracks, makes this method more effective.
- Radon reduction systems can be installed in buildings with or without basements, as well as in buildings with crawlspaces. The building's design will determine the most effective method for radon reduction.

- The cost of reducing radon in a home depends on how the building was built and the extent of the radon problem. The majority of buildings can be fixed for approximately the same cost as other common home repairs.

Where Can I Get a Test Kit?

- **Short-term test kits** are available at a reduced cost of \$5 (normally \$11) at the Jackson County Health Department Environmental Health Office during National Radon Action Month in January. The short-term kit allows you to test your home or other building for 3-7 days. For more information, please call (517) 788-4433.
- If you would like to do a **long-term test** of at least 3 months and up to a year, you can purchase these tests online from the State of Michigan Healthy Homes Section at <http://cgi.radon.com/sub/mi/> or in local hardware and home improvement stores. The long-term kits provide you with the long-term average radon level that you are exposed to within a building. This is considered a better test if you plan to live in a house or use a building for many years. **The Jackson County Health Department does NOT stock long-term test kits.**

Protect your health and your home! Test for Radon in your house, school, or other building today.

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