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## **Living Well**

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### **January: National Radon Action Month**

Radon is an odorless, colorless, tasteless gas produced by the decay of natural radioactive materials found in the soil. It is a naturally occurring environmental hazard that seeps into homes and other buildings through joints and cracks in the foundation and has been found above recommended levels in as many as one in four homes in Kansas.

Radon exposure accounts for approximately 12% of annual lung cancers deaths in the United States, or approximately 21,000 deaths. Additionally, radon exposure is known to be the leading cause of lung cancer in non-smokers and the second leading cause of lung cancer in smokers. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) estimates that residential radon exposure in Kansas causes around 200 new cases of lung cancer annually in Kansas.

Because no level of radon is considered absolutely safe, radon levels in a home should be reduced as much as reasonably possible. Kansas homes average about 4.8 picocuries of radon per liter of air (pCi/L). According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), corrective measures should be taken to reduce radon levels in a home if the average annual level is higher than 4.0 pCi/L. In most cases, you can reduce radon levels to 2.0 pCi/L or lower.

January is National Radon Action Month and is a great time to test your home for radon. Because you cannot see or smell radon, people tend to minimize the health effects and ignore the possibility that it might exist in elevated levels in their homes. Radon test kits are available

in the both the in the Flint Hills District Extension Offices in Council Grove and Cottonwood Falls for \$5.

If you would like additional information regarding radon exposure and testing, you can contact the Flint Hills District Extension office in Council Grove at 620-767-5136 or the office in Cottonwood Falls at 620-273-6491. The Kansas Radon Program, which is housed at Kansas State University in the College of Engineering's Extension Programs Department, also provides information to Kansas residents on radon at [www.kansasradonprogram.org](http://www.kansasradonprogram.org) and directly through the state radon hotline at 1-800-693-5343.

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