

Why You Should Test for Radon in York Homes

Living in York County, Pennsylvania, means enjoying a rich history, a strong sense of community, and a landscape that shifts from rolling farmland to quiet suburbs. But beneath that charm lies a hazard that too many homeowners overlook: radon gas. I have spent years working on indoor air quality in this region, and I can tell you that the geology of York County makes radon a persistent problem. The real question is whether you have taken the simple step to test for radon in York before it affects your family's health.

Radon is a radioactive gas that comes from the natural decay of uranium in soil and rock. It seeps into homes through cracks in foundations, gaps around pipes, and other openings. Because it is invisible and odorless, it can build up to dangerous levels without any obvious sign. The EPA estimates that one in five homes in Pennsylvania has elevated radon levels, and York County falls squarely in a zone with high potential. That is why I always advise homeowners here to make testing a priority right after they move in, or even before they close on a property.

The Local Risk You Cannot Afford to Ignore

York County sits on a mix of limestone, shale, and granite, all of which can contain trace amounts of uranium. As those rocks break down over time, radon is released into the soil and then into the air. When a house sits on that ground, the gas can enter through the basement or crawl space and accumulate. I have seen homes in the same neighborhood where one house has a reading of 2 picocuries per liter and the next has 20. The difference often comes down to foundation condition, soil porosity, and the quality of the original construction.

That is why a one-size-fits-all approach does not work here. You cannot assume your neighbor's low test result means your home is safe. The only way to know your own exposure is to [test for radon in York](#) with a reliable radon test kit. I recommend starting with a short-term test, usually a charcoal canister that sits in the lowest livable area for two to seven days. These are inexpensive and available at most hardware stores or through the health department. You mail the canister to a lab, and within a week you have a clear number.

Long-Term Monitoring Gives Better Data

A charcoal canister gives you a snapshot, but radon levels can fluctuate with weather, seasons, and how much you run your ventilation systems. A continuous monitor, which plugs into a wall and records hourly readings over months, provides a much more accurate picture of your annual average. I have used both methods in my own home, and I found that the continuous monitor caught a spike during a rainy spring that the short-term test had missed. If you are serious about your family's safety, consider a long-term test after the initial screening.



For renters, the situation is trickier. You may not control the property, but you still have a right to know. In Pennsylvania, real estate disclosure laws require sellers to tell buyers about known radon problems, but they do not mandate testing. If you are renting, ask your landlord for test results or request permission to run your own. A simple test can give you peace of mind or prompt a conversation about mitigation.

What to Do If Your Levels Are High

If your test comes back at 4 picocuries per liter or higher, the EPA recommends taking action. This does not mean you need to panic, but you do need a plan. The most effective mitigation system for York County homes is sub-slab depressurization. This involves drilling a small hole in the basement floor, inserting a pipe, and running it to a fan that vents the gas outside. It is a proven method that can reduce radon levels by 99 percent.

I have seen homeowners try cheaper fixes like sealants alone, and those rarely work for long. Cracks in concrete shift with temperature and moisture, and radon will find a new path. Sealants can help as part of a larger strategy, but they should never replace a proper mitigation system. A certified mitigator can assess your home's specific layout and recommend the right combination of sub-slab depressurization, improved ventilation, and sealing of entry points.

New Construction Offers a Better Way Forward

For anyone building a new home in York County, radon-resistant construction should be on the checklist from the start. This means placing a layer of gravel under the slab, sealing the foundation membrane, and installing a passive vent pipe that can later be fitted with a fan if needed. The added cost is minimal compared to retrofitting later. I always tell builders that including these features during construction is like buying insurance that you never have to file a claim on.

The national radon action plan, led by the EPA and other agencies, has pushed for greater awareness and testing across the country. Pennsylvania has its own radon program within the health department, and they offer free test kits to residents in some counties. York County residents should take advantage of these resources. The test itself is simple, and the results can save you from a long-term health risk that is entirely preventable.

Why Testing Matters Beyond Your Own Home

Radon exposure is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States, after smoking. That statistic is not meant to scare you, but it should motivate you to take action. The link between radon and lung cancer is well established, and the risk increases with prolonged exposure. For children, whose lungs are still developing and who breathe faster than adults, the danger is even greater. Testing your home is one of the most effective steps you can take to protect your family.

I have worked with families who waited years before testing, only to find levels above 10 picocuries per liter. In every case, they wished they had done it sooner. The good news is that mitigation systems are reliable and affordable, especially when you consider the alternative. A typical sub-slab depressurization installation costs between \$800 and \$1,500, and it runs on about the same electricity as a small light bulb. Compared to the emotional and financial toll of lung cancer treatment, that is a bargain.

If you are a homeowner in York, I encourage you to test for radon in York this season. Start with a radon test kit from a local hardware store or order one from the health department. Follow the instructions carefully, keep the kit away from drafts and direct sunlight, and send it in as soon as the test period ends. When the results come back, share them with a certified mitigator if the number is high. Do not rely on guesswork or assume that because your house is newer it is safe. New construction can have radon problems too, especially if the builder skipped radon-resistant construction.



One more thing: if you are buying a home, include a radon test as part of your home inspection. Many inspectors offer this as an add-on service, or you can do it yourself before the sale closes. Knowing the radon level before you buy gives you leverage to negotiate mitigation costs or choose a different property altogether. It is a small step that can save you thousands of dollars and years of worry.

York County is a wonderful place to live, and the radon risk here does not have to be a dealbreaker. It is simply a problem that requires awareness and action. By testing your home, you are not only protecting your own health but also contributing to a community that takes this issue seriously. Every test result shared with the health department helps build a better picture of local radon patterns, which in turn leads to better public policy and more targeted resources.

So grab a test kit, follow the directions, and get that number. It is one of the easiest things you can do for your home, and it might be the most important.