

Why Radon Testing York Homeowners Should Take Seriously

When I first moved into my home in York County, Pennsylvania, I didn't think much about what might be lurking in the basement. Like most people, I worried about the usual things, old wiring, drafty windows, maybe a leaky pipe. But a friend who worked in home inspections mentioned something I had never considered: radon. That conversation led me down a path of research and eventually to radon testing York homeowners rely on today. What I learned changed how I think about indoor air quality forever.

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that comes from the decay of uranium in soil, rock, and water. It moves up through the ground and into homes through cracks in foundations, gaps around pipes, and other openings. You cannot see it, smell it, or taste it. The only way to know if your home has elevated radon levels is to test for it. And if you live in York County, the odds are higher than you might think. The EPA has designated much of Pennsylvania, including York County, as Zone 1, meaning the average indoor radon levels are predicted to be above the action level of 4 picocuries per liter (pCi/L).



Understanding Radon and Its Risks

Radon gas is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States, according to the EPA. Only smoking causes more lung cancer deaths. This is not a distant risk, it is a real, measurable threat that affects homes in our area every day. The gas decays into radioactive particles that can get trapped in your lungs when you breathe, damaging lung tissue over time. For non-smokers, radon exposure is the number one cause of lung cancer. The Surgeon General has urged all Americans to test their homes for radon, especially those living in high-risk zones like York County.

But the risk does not come from a single high reading alone. Even moderate levels of radon, when you are exposed to them year after year, can add up. That is why [radon testing York](#) homes is not just a one-time event. It should be part of a regular home maintenance routine, especially after renovations, changes to your home's foundation, or whenever you buy or sell a property.

How Radon Testing Works

There are several ways to test for radon, and each has its strengths. The most common method for initial screening is a short-term test. These typically use activated carbon, a charcoal-based material that absorbs radon gas over a period of two to seven days. You place the test device in the lowest livable area of your home, usually the basement or first floor, and then send it to a lab for analysis. Short-term tests are inexpensive and quick, but they only give you a snapshot. Because radon levels can fluctuate with weather, season, and how you use your home, a short-term test might miss a high reading that occurs later.



For a more accurate picture, a long-term test is better. These tests last more than 90 days and measure average radon levels over an extended period. They give you a truer sense of your year-round exposure. The EPA recommends long-term testing for the most reliable results. There are also continuous radon monitors, which are electronic devices that provide real-time readings and can show how levels change hour by hour. These are more expensive but useful if you want to track trends or verify the effectiveness of a radon system installation.

In my own home, I started with a short-term test. The result came back at 6.3 pCi/L, well above the EPA action level. That was a wake-up call. I followed up with a long-term test to confirm, and it showed an average of 5.8 pCi/L over three months. That is when I knew I needed radon mitigation.

Radon Mitigation: What It Involves

Radon mitigation is not a DIY project for most homeowners. It requires a professional assessment and proper installation. The most common system for homes in York County is sub-slab depressurization. This involves drilling a small hole in the basement floor, inserting a radon vent pipe that runs up through the house and out the roof, and installing a fan to create

suction under the slab. This fan replacement is a critical component, if the fan fails or is undersized, the system will not work effectively. The goal is to pull radon gas from beneath the house and vent it safely above the roofline, where it disperses harmlessly into the air.

Another method, soil suction, works similarly but is used when the home has a crawl space or a gravel floor. The principle is the same: create negative pressure below the house to keep radon out of the living space. A properly designed radon system installation can reduce indoor radon levels by up to 99 percent. After my system was installed, I had follow-up testing done to verify the levels dropped. They went from 5.8 pCi/L down to 1.2 pCi/L. That is well below the EPA action level, and I sleep better knowing my family is breathing cleaner air.



The Role of Follow-Up Testing

Follow-up testing is not optional. Even after a successful radon mitigation, levels can change over time. The fan can wear out, the soil around the foundation can shift, or new cracks can develop. The EPA recommends retesting your home every two years, or after any major structural change. Some continuous radon monitors can alert you if levels rise unexpectedly.

For me, I do a short-term test every spring and a long-term test every other year. It gives me peace of mind.

If you are buying or selling a home in York County, radon testing should be part of the inspection process. Many buyers now request it, and some lenders even require it. A high radon level can be a deal-breaker, but it is also something that can be fixed. With proper mitigation, a home that tested high can be made safe. The radon map for Pennsylvania clearly shows York County as a high-risk area, so ignoring the issue is not wise.

Practical Tips for Homeowners

- Start with a short-term test from a hardware store or online retailer. Make sure it is EPA-approved and follow the instructions exactly, keep windows and doors closed during the test period for accurate results.
- If your short-term test shows levels at or above 4 pCi/L, follow up with a long-term test before making any decisions. One high reading does not always mean a systemic problem, but it should not be ignored.
- If you confirm high levels, contact a certified radon mitigation professional. They will assess your home's construction and recommend a system. Do not try to seal cracks alone, that rarely works and can even trap radon in living spaces.
- After mitigation, schedule follow-up testing within 30 days to verify the system is working. Then retest every two years or after any major renovation.

Why Radon Testing York Homes Matters

Radon testing York homes is not a luxury, it is a necessity for anyone living in this part of Pennsylvania. The geology of York County, with its underlying rock formations, creates conditions where radon gas can accumulate in homes. The EPA and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection both encourage widespread testing. Yet many homeowners still put it off, thinking it is something that happens to other people. The truth is that radon does not discriminate. It can affect new homes and old homes, big houses and small apartments, basements and first floors.

I have seen too many cases where a family discovers radon only after someone gets sick. That is why I urge everyone I know to test their homes. It is simple, inexpensive, and it can save lives. The data from the radon map is clear: York County is in a high-risk zone. If you have not tested your home yet, now is the time. If you have tested and found elevated levels, do not wait to act. Radon mitigation can make your home safe again, and follow-up testing ensures it stays that way.



In the end, the most important step is simply to start. Buy a test kit, follow the steps, and take the results seriously. For the health of your family, radon testing York is one of the smartest investments you can make. It is not about fear, it is about knowledge and action. And that is something every homeowner deserves.