Why Radon Testing York County Should Be on Your Home Maintenance List

If you live in or near York County, you probably know the area for its rolling farmland, historic downtown, and growing suburban neighborhoods. What many homeowners don't realize is that the same geology that makes this part of Pennsylvania so scenic also puts their indoor air at risk. Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that seeps up from the soil, and it can build up inside homes to levels that pose serious health risks. The tricky part is that you can't see it, smell it, or taste it. The only way to know if your home has a problem is to test for it.

I've spent years working with homeowners in this region, and I can tell you that radon testing York County is not just a one-time thing. It's something you need to think about when you buy a house, after major renovations, and even every few years just to stay safe. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that radon causes more than 20,000 lung cancer deaths annually in the United States, and Pennsylvania has some of the highest radon levels in the country. York County, in particular, sits in a high-risk zone. So if you haven't tested yet, now is the time.

How Radon Gets Into Your Home

Radon comes from the natural decay of uranium in soil and rock. As it breaks down, it turns into a gas that moves up through the ground and into the air. When a house sits on top of that soil, the gas can enter through cracks in the foundation, gaps around pipes, sump pumps, and even through the concrete itself. Once inside, it gets trapped and can build up to dangerous concentrations.

The amount of radon in a home depends on a lot of factors: the soil composition, the construction of the house, the weather, and even how you use your heating and cooling system. Two identical houses built next to each other can have very different radon levels. That's why you can't rely on your neighbor's test results. You have to test your own home.

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Short-Term vs. Long-Term Testing

When people first hear about radon testing York County, they often ask what kind of test to buy. The two main options are short-term and long-term tests. Short-term tests stay in your home for two to seven days. They give you a quick snapshot, which is useful if you're in the middle of a real estate transaction or just want a fast answer. But they can be less accurate because radon levels fluctuate day to day and season to season.

Long-term tests stay in place for more than 90 days. They give you a much better picture of your average annual exposure, which is what really matters for your health. I usually recommend starting with a short-term test to see if you have a potential issue. If the result comes back above 4 picocuries per liter (the EPA action level), then follow up with a long-term test before making any big decisions about mitigation.



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You can buy test kits at hardware stores, online, or through the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The DEP also offers free or low-cost test kits to Pennsylvania residents through their Radon Division. If you want the most reliable results, hire a certified radon measurement professional. They use continuous monitors that record radon levels over time and can spot patterns that a simple charcoal canister might miss.

What the Numbers Mean

The EPA says you should fix your home if your radon level is 4 pCi/L or higher. But that's not a magic number. Even levels below 4 pCi/L carry some risk. The agency estimates that about 1 in 15 homes in the U.S. has elevated radon levels, and in Pennsylvania that number is closer to 1 in 3 in some counties.

I've seen homes in York County with readings over 100 pCi/L. That's 25 times the EPA action level. Those homeowners were shocked, but they were also grateful they tested. After mitigation, their levels dropped below 2 pCi/L. That's a huge reduction in risk. The key is to test early and test often.

When to Test and What to Expect

The best time to test is during the heating season, when your windows are closed and the house is sealed up. That's when radon levels tend to be highest. But you can test any time of year, as long as you follow the instructions on the kit. Close windows and doors for at least 12 hours before starting the test, and keep them closed as much as possible during the test period. Place the test device in the lowest livable level of your home, like a basement or first-floor room. Avoid bathrooms, kitchens, and areas with high humidity or drafts.

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Real Estate Transactions

If you're buying or selling a home in York County, radon testing is almost always part of the deal. Most buyers want to see a test result before they close. If the test comes back high, you

can negotiate for a mitigation system to be installed. Some sellers install a system proactively to make the home more attractive to buyers. Either way, it's better to know upfront than to discover the problem after you've moved in.

Mitigation Options

If your test shows elevated radon levels, don't panic. Mitigation is usually straightforward and effective. The most common method is sub-slab depressurization. A contractor drills a small hole in your basement floor, inserts a pipe, and connects it to a fan that pulls the radon-laden air from under the house and vents it safely outside. The system runs continuously and uses very little electricity.



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Other methods include sealing cracks and openings in the foundation, improving ventilation in crawl spaces, or installing a heat recovery ventilator. The right solution depends on your home's construction and the severity of the problem. A certified radon mitigation professional can assess your home and design a system that works.

After mitigation, you should test again to make sure the system is working. Some systems include a manometer that shows if the fan is running, but only a follow-up radon test can confirm that the levels have dropped. I recommend retesting every two years, even if you have a mitigation system in place. Fans can fail, and soil conditions can change over time.

Radon and Your Health

Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer after smoking. The risk is higher for smokers, but even non-smokers are at risk. The radioactive particles from radon decay get trapped in your lungs when you breathe, and they damage the DNA in your cells. Over many years, that damage can lead to cancer. The good news is that radon-induced lung cancer is almost entirely preventable. Testing and mitigation are simple and affordable compared to the cost of treating cancer.

I've talked to too many people who said they wish they had tested sooner. One couple in York told me they lived in their house for 15 years before a neighbor mentioned radon testing. Their test came back at 12 pCi/L. They installed a mitigation system and their levels dropped to 1.5 pCi/L. They were relieved, but they also wondered how much exposure they had already accumulated. Don't let that be you.

Finding Help

If you're not sure where to start, the Pennsylvania DEP has a radon division that can answer questions and send you a test kit. They also maintain a list of certified radon measurement and mitigation professionals. You can find local contractors who specialize in radon testing York County and the surrounding areas. A good contractor will walk you through the process, explain the results, and help you decide on the best course of action.

When you choose a mitigation contractor, look for someone who is certified by the National Radon Proficiency Program (NRPP) or the Pennsylvania DEP. Ask for references and check that they carry liability insurance. A quality contractor will also provide a written guarantee that the system will reduce radon levels below 4 pCi/L.



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For local residents, York PA Radon Pros, located at 867 Clare Ln, York, PA 17402, USA, can be reached at +1 717-807-5245. They are a local resource for radon testing, mitigation, and fan replacement in York and Adams County, Pennsylvania, offering trusted contractor recommendations and DEP-backed data.

Testing your home for radon is one of the smartest things you can do for your family's health. It's cheap, easy, and gives you peace of mind. If you haven't tested yet, buy a kit today or call a professional to get started. The gas is invisible, but the risk is real. Don't wait until it's too late.