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For Immediate Release

Protecting our Communities Health in Their Homes  
*Residents are urged to test homes for radon, the second leading cause of lung cancer in U.S*

The Winnebago County Health Department (WCHD) is working with the US Environmental Health Protection Agency (EPA) in a nationwide campaign to educate citizens about the dangers of radon exposure and to encourage them to take action to protect their homes and families during national Radon Awareness Month in January.

Due to the geology in the area, Winnebago County is considered “at risk” for high levels of radon gas. Radon gas is the radioactive decay from Uranium deposits found in rock, soil and water, which is naturally occurring, invisible, odorless, tasteless gas that is dispersed in outdoor air, but which can reach harmful levels when trapped in buildings. Radon is present at elevated levels in 2 out of every 5 homes in Winnebago County. Scientists have long been concerned about the health risk of radon, but never before has there been such overwhelming proof that exposure to elevated levels of radon causes lung cancer in humans.

The U.S. Environmental Health Protection Agency estimates radon is responsible for more than 20,000 lung cancer deaths per year. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S. after smoking and the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers. “However” says WCHD Environmental Health Improvement Director, Todd Marshall, “because you can’t see or smell radon, people tend to downplay the health effects and ignore the possibility that there might be a silent killer in their homes.”

According to Ryan Kerch, WCHD Environmental Health Supervisor, “Radon levels are typically highest in the basement, which more and more families are using for living space, exercise rooms, or kids’ play areas. Testing for Radon is highly recommended, especially if you and your family spend a great deal of time in this lower-level living area.”

Testing your home for radon can be simple, inexpensive, and can save lives. During National Radon Awareness Month (January), the Winnebago County Health Department's Environmental Health Division is offering homeowners the opportunity to purchase an AirChek Radon Test Kit for \$8.00 (normally \$10.00). Kits can be purchased at the Environmental Health Division at 401 Division Street, Room 205. This test kit is easy to use; the homeowner buys the kit, conducts the test in their basement, and mails the kit in a pre-paid envelope to the certified laboratory for analysis. The laboratory will mail the results back to the homeowner within a few days of receiving the kit.

The WCHD's Environmental Health Division also has a Radon Gas Monitor for homeowners to check-out for two to seven days. This monitor is a screening and awareness tool only, but may be an appropriate first step in determining your home's risk. A deposit of \$25.00 is required to check-out the monitor and will be given back when the screening device is returned the Department.

For more information on both the AirChek Radon Test Kit and Radon Gas Monitor, call the WCHD's Radon Specialist, Sheila Jascemskas at 815-720-4125, or visit the WCHD website at [www.wchd.org](http://www.wchd.org). Like us on [Facebook](#). Follow us on [Twitter](#). Or Contact the Environmental Health Division at Winnebago County Health Department 401 Division Street, PO Box 4009, Rockford, Illinois 61110, or by phone at 815-720-4100.

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