

RADON:



What you need to know to protect your early childcare education facility.

What is radon?

Radon is a naturally occurring odorless, tasteless, and colorless radioactive gas that seeps into buildings from surrounding uranium-rich rocks, soils, and water. Through cracks in foundations, radon travels from the ground indoors. Radon may also be found in contaminated surface water or groundwater.

How does radon impact health?

As you breathe, radon decomposes into radioactive air particles that can get stuck in your lungs. Over time, these particles decay, damage lung tissue, and eventually lead to lung cancer. Due to children's smaller lungs and faster breathing rates, they are exposed to greater amounts of radon. Radon is a carcinogen. *Among non-smokers, radon is the leading cause of lung cancer*, causing an estimated 21,000 deaths per year in the U.S. According to the American Lung Association, the rate of new lung cancer cases in Pennsylvania is 63 per 100,000 persons, higher than the national rate of 58. Additionally, when ingested via contaminated water, radon increases the risk of developing internal organ cancers, like stomach cancer.

Should I be concerned about radon?

Pennsylvania has one of the most serious radon problems in the country because of uranium-rich rocks and soils underlying the state. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), most of Pennsylvania (48 of 67 counties) is in Zone 1, the highest potential for elevated levels of radon. An estimated 40% of Pennsylvania homes have radon levels above the EPA's action guideline of 4 picocuries per liter (pCi/L). Testing is the only way to determine if radon is a problem. The EPA recommends radon testing for all childcare education facilities, including school and home-based care settings.

How to test for radon?

A free radon test kit was provided in the supply kit sent from the Department of Health. Radon should be tested in all frequently used rooms on and below the ground level. For more information on radon and testing, call the Pennsylvania Radon Hotline at 800-237-2366.

What to do if radon is found to be high?

A radon concentration of 4 pCi/L is high. If you receive a high result, confirm the results with a second test. If levels are still high, contact a local certified radon mitigation contractor to install a radon reduction system. Mitigation costs can range from \$500 to \$2,000, with an average cost of \$1,000. Funding opportunities may be announced through your local Regional Child Development Office at dhs.pa.gov/contact/Pages/Regional-Child-Development-Offices.aspx.

Continue to monitor the system over time and check for radon. All Pennsylvania residents who have tested their home or other building for radon and detected screening levels over 100 pCi/L may receive a free short-term confirmation test kit from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Additionally, if an active (fan-powered) radon mitigation system has been installed in your home within the last year, you may receive a free, long-term radon test kit. After mitigation, DEP recommends testing once every two years. If mitigation was not necessary after initial testing, test your facility once every five years.

Visit dep.pa.gov/radon or call 1-800-23RADON to learn more about radon testing and mitigation.