



## Commonwealth of Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Remember Radon on Earth Day – Test Your Home**

*Many Areas of State Have High Levels of Radon*

**FRANKFORT, KY. (April 22, 2017)** – As part of the Earth Day 2019, the Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH) is helping to spread the word about how important the environment is when it comes to your health. DPH is encouraging Kentuckians to learn more about the potential health effects of radon exposure and how to check your home for this potentially dangerous gas.

“Since it originated in 1970, Earth Day has served as a platform for education and advocacy efforts in support of a better world, cleaner air, and fresh water. Keeping with the spirit of the observance, the Cabinet for Health and Family Services encourages Kentuckians to learn more about the potential dangers of radon exposure and the various ways environmental factors play a role in one’s health,” said Dr. Jeff Howard, DPH Commissioner.

Radon occurs naturally in the environment and can be found in rocks such as granite and limestone. An odorless, colorless, tasteless gas, radon produces radioactive energy when it decays. The odorless gas can enter homes through cracks in walls, floors and

foundations. It can also be released from building materials or through water originating from radon-contaminated wells, according to the [National Institutes of Health \(NIH\)](#). Radon levels can be greater in homes and buildings that are well-insulated, tightly sealed or built on soil rich in the radioactive elements uranium, radium and thorium.

Many Kentucky counties are in zones predicted to have average indoor radon levels above what is generally considered to be safe (the action level for radon is 4 pico curies per liter of air), yet, fewer than 1 in 10 Kentucky houses has been tested for radon. More information about indoor radon potential across the state is available at Kentucky Envirohealthlink's [Radon in Kentucky](#) interactive web application.

“Radon, combined with indoor second-hand smoke, increases chances of lung cancer,” said Rebecca Gillis, director of the Division of Public Health Protection and Safety. “The good news is that radon levels in a home can be dramatically reduced or even eliminated. Free kits are made available through the Kentucky Radon Program.”

“All homes should be tested for radon, regardless of geographic location,” said Clay Hardwick, coordinator for Kentucky’s Radon Program. “It doesn’t matter the type of home a person lives in, it is a good idea to test and find out what the radon level is for the home.”

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which supports DPH’s [Radon Program](#) through a federal grant award, elevated radon levels in the home are a common occurrence. In fact, an estimated 1 in 15 homes in the U.S. have high radon levels.

“Because of the ways that radon and tobacco smoke damage the lungs, high radon levels are especially dangerous for people who smoke,” said Benjamin Scott, an epidemiologist with [Kentucky EnviroHealthLink](#), a website designated to exploring how the environment affects health. “Your environment matters, especially in the case of radon. Smokers who live in homes with high radon levels have a risk of lung cancer that’s 10 times higher than nonsmokers who live in homes with high radon levels.”

Radon builds up in homes over time and cannot be seen, tasted, or smelled. The only way to know if radon levels are elevated is to test, which is simple to complete and inexpensive. Test kits are available for free through several local health departments throughout the state, as well as through the Kentucky Radon program by calling (502) 564-4856.

Homeowners can test their homes with a simple kit and if their home has high radon levels, they can fix it. Radon reduction repairs can be done with the help of a licensed radon mitigation contractor.

For more information on radon, radon testing and mitigation or to order a test kit online, simply go to the Cabinet's website: [www.chfs.ky.gov](http://www.chfs.ky.gov) and type "radon" in the "What can we help you find?" toolbar. The CDC also has a radon website at: <http://www.cdc.gov/radon>.

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*The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is home to most of the state's human services and healthcare programs, including the Department for Medicaid Services, the Department for Community Based Services the Department for Public Health and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full- and part-time employees located across the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.*

Additional information is available at <http://chfs.ky.gov/>.

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