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Department of
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STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

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State offering free radon test kits for National Radon Action Month

(Fairbanks, AK) – January is National Radon Action Month and the Division of Geological & Geophysical Surveys (DGGs) is offering free radon test kits to Alaskans to test their homes for the colorless, odorless, cancer-causing gas.

Radon gas is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States, according to the U.S. Surgeon General. Radon is a radioactive gas that originates from certain types of bedrock found commonly throughout Alaska and the United States. Radon enters buildings through cracks and gaps in the foundation, where it tends to collect and concentrate indoors, especially when buildings are sealed against cold winter temperatures. Radon is only detectable through specific air testing. Winter is the best time to test since it's when indoor radon concentrations are highest and when we spend the most time indoors.

“In addition to cold temperatures and darkness, the COVID-19 pandemic is forcing Alaskans to spend even more time indoors over the winter, making it particularly important to know the radon gas concentration in your home and ensure a safe living environment,” said Jennifer Athey, a geologist with DGGs’ Alaska Radon Program. “Radon exposure is especially risky to people who smoke and may cause lung cancer, even in non-smokers, within five to 30 years.”

The DGGs publishes an online map of radon prevalence throughout the state of Alaska. This interactive map may be found at <https://maps.dggs.alaska.gov/radon/>. Through this program, DGGs hopes to improve regional knowledge to better inform Alaskans of the risks of radon in their local areas.

“The radon map helps homeowners to know where radon has been found in Alaska so far,” said Athey. “However, all Alaskans are encouraged to test their homes for radon, as any home with a foundation in contact with the ground can concentrate this hazardous gas.”

To request a free radon testing kit or get more information about radon testing or home repairs, visit the DGGs “Radon in Alaska” webpage at

<https://dggs.alaska.gov/hazards/radon.html>. Fill out the online questionnaire or contact Sam Knapp at sam.knapp@alaska.gov or 907-799-6924 to request a kit.

As part of its radon awareness program, the DGGS last month organized the Alaska Radon Poster Contest for Alaska youth aged nine to 14 years old to help educate Alaskans about the risks of radon. Children competed to produce the most informative, original, and eye-catching poster as a fun and educational way to raise awareness about radon throughout the state, said Athey. Submissions could be hand-drawn or digital and needed to convey radon-related information such as origins, health risks, testing, or home mitigation in a visual format.

First place in the contest went to Leo Tape from Randy Smith Elementary School in Fairbanks, with second place going to his sister, Sophia Tape, from Pearl Creek Elementary School. Lucy Roush of Pearl Creek Elementary School was awarded third place. The top three entries received prizes that included gift certificates to Michaels arts and crafts store. Leo Tape's winning poster will be entered in the National Radon Poster Contest to be judged this month.

In addition to DGGS, the sponsors of the Alaska Radon Poster Contest included the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) Cooperative Extension Service, the American Lung Association in Alaska, and the National Extension Healthy Homes Partnership.

To see this year's winning entries, please visit <https://dggs.alaska.gov/outreach/radon-poster.html>. To see entries and results from the National Radon Poster Contest in January 2022, visit <http://www.radonleaders.org/>.

The Alaska Radon Program is funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's State Indoor Radon Grant to Alaska's Department of Environmental Conservation, Division of Air Quality. The grant is implemented through a partnership of DGGS and UAF's Cooperative Extension Service.

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