

State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources



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Alaskans invited to participate in radon project

(Fairbanks, AK) – The Division of Geological & Geophysical Surveys and University of Alaska Fairbanks' School of Natural Resources and Extension are creating a radon database and public visualization tools to better understand radon potential and identify where elevated levels of radon exist in the State of Alaska.

Indoor exposure to radon gas causes more than 20,000 deaths annually in the United States and it is the number-one cause of lung cancer among non-smokers. Because people can't see or smell radon, it's easy to forget that radon can be a problem in homes, schools, and other buildings.

Radon is a decay product of uranium, which naturally occurs in rocks and sediments throughout Alaska. The Environmental Protection Agency's regional radon zone map highlights much of the Interior, the Matanuska-Susitna region, and Anchorage as having elevated radon potential. Recent testing has shown that many households in Alaska have indoor radon concentrations above the EPA's action level.

Factors that influence radon concentrations in dwellings include the permeability of soils under the building, the style and connection of the foundation to the ground, and the operation of mechanical devices in the dwelling such as fans, furnaces, and HVACs.

The only way to know if your home has a radon problem is to test! Information on how to test and reduce radon exposure are at <https://www.uaf.edu/ces/energy/radon/>. Alaskans are invited to contribute radon test results to the database, which will aggregate results to preserve confidentiality.

For more information or to participate in the study, contact project leads Art Nash (UAF) at 907-474-6366, alnashjr@alaska.edu or Jennifer Athey (DGGS), 907-451-5028, jennifer.athey@alaska.gov. Additional information on radon in Alaska communities is available from the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health (www.epi.alaska.gov/bulletins/docs/b2015_25.pdf).

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