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Keep your Alaska home safe with free radon testing kit

(Fairbanks, AK) – You can't see, smell, or taste radon gas, but it could be present at a dangerous level in your home. Winter's cold weather usually keeps doors and windows shut tight and the furnace running – an ideal time to check your home for radon gas.

With January designated as National Radon Action Month, now is a good time to consider asking for a free radon test kit from one of several sources giving them away while weather is cold, or until supplies run out.

“As a radioactive gas, radon is the leading cause of lung cancer deaths among nonsmokers in America, killing about 21,000 Americans a year,” said Steve Masterman, director of the Division of Geological & Geophysical Surveys (DGGs). “Alaskans would do well to take advantage of the opportunity to test for this unseen, but very real, health hazard.”

Testing kits will be available while the weather is cold or until supplies run out. Kits may be picked up in person or, if necessary, mailed to you.

- In Anchorage and outlying areas, kits are available at the Anchorage office of the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) Cooperative Extension Service, located on the fourth floor of the Loussac Public Library, Monday-Thursday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (closed 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. for lunch). Anchorage radon clinics are scheduled at the same location on Jan. 22, Jan. 27, and Jan. 28 from noon to 6 p.m. Call (907) 786-6300 for details.
- In the Matanuska-Susitna Valley, kits will be available at the Cooperative Extension Service's Matanuska Experiment Farm at 1509 S. Georgeson Road in Palmer from noon to 6 p.m. on Thursday Jan. 23, and Wednesday, Feb. 5. Call (907) 745-3360 for details.
- In Fairbanks and elsewhere, kits are available at the Division of Geological & Geophysical Surveys at 3354 College Road in Fairbanks, Monday-Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., except state holidays. Call (907) 451-5010 for details.

Radon gas forms naturally in the ground as small amounts of uranium in rocks and soils decay, Masterman said. Radon may enter homes through small cracks in slabs or cinder block walls, or through holes in a crawlspace's vapor barrier. Once it gets in your house, it can get in your lungs.

The Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Surgeon General urge all Americans to protect their health by testing their homes, schools, and other buildings for radon.

Exposure to radon is a preventable health risk and testing radon levels in your home can help prevent unnecessary exposure. If high levels of radon are detected in your home, you can take steps to fix the problem to protect yourself and your family.

For the schedule of radon clinics in Anchorage and Palmer, go to: uaf.edu/ces/districts/anchorage/. For additional information on radon in Alaska, visit: (dggs.alaska.gov/hazards/radon.html) and UAF (www.uaf.edu/ces/foodhealth/radon/).

CONTACT: Jennifer Athey of DGGS at 907-451-5028 or jennifer.athey@alaska.gov; Art Nash of UAF at 907-474-6366 or alnashjr@alaska.edu; or Alaska's toll-free radon hotline at 800-478-8324.

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