



## **Metro Public Health Department Radon Fact Sheet**

### **WHAT IS RADON?**

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that is odorless, colorless and tasteless. It comes from the natural decay of uranium that is found in nearly all soils in the United States. Middle Tennessee has been identified by EPA as having high levels of radon in the soil. Radon gas is in the air, both inside and outside. When people are outside, the radon levels are so low that they pose no health threat. Unfortunately, radon gas inside homes and buildings can build up to levels that become unhealthy.

### **WHY IS RADON A PROBLEM?**

National studies have found that long-term exposure to radon is linked to lung cancer. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer, after cigarette smoking. There is no scientific evidence that children are at a higher risk from radon than adults. The risk estimates are based on exposure over a lifetime, and most lung cancer cases occur after age 60. Radon does not appear to be linked to any other diseases, such as asthma.

### **HOW ARE METRO BUILDINGS TESTED?**

The Metro Public Health Department tested Metro buildings in frequently occupied rooms (such as conference rooms and offices) that are in contact with the ground, or are directly above unoccupied areas of the basement. Testing consists of placing a test device in each room, exposing between two and seven days, and then returning it to a laboratory to be measured.

### **WHAT LEVEL OF RADON IS A PROBLEM AND HOW CAN IT BE FIXED?**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends that action be taken to reduce levels if the concentration of radon is 4 picocuries per liter (pCi/L) or higher. For school rooms with levels of 4 pCi/L or more, venting systems can be installed that vent radon gas from below the ground to the outside, where it is quickly diluted to very low levels. Sometimes heating-ventilation-air conditioning systems are adjusted to increase ventilation or air pressure so that radon levels are reduced. Sealing radon entry points in floor and wall cracks are also recommended to reduce radon levels.

### **WHAT CAN I DO?**

Test your home! According to EPA, more than 75 percent of radon exposure comes from the home environment.

### **HOW CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?**

The Health Department offers more information about radon and radon testing on at [health.nashville.gov](http://health.nashville.gov) or by calling 340-5653. Additional information about radon is also available on the following websites:

Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC)

<http://www.tn.gov/environment/ea/radon/>

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

<http://www.epa.gov/radon/>