Radon is a Radioactive Gas

Radon is a radioactive element that is part of the radioactive decay chain of naturally occurring uranium in soil. You can't see radon. You can't smell radon and you can't taste radon. Unlike carbon monoxide and many other home pollutants, radon's adverse health effect, lung cancer, is usually not produced immediately. Thus you may be exposed to radon for many years without ever suspecting its presence in your home.

The USEPA action level for radon is 4.0 picocuries per liter of air (pCi/L). The risk of developing lung cancer at 4.0 pCi/L is estimated at about 7 lung cancer deaths per 1000 persons. That is why USEPA and IEMA recommends reducing your radon level if the concentration is 4.0 pCi/L or more. Lung cancer in humans arising from radon exposure is recognized by the following health and environmental organizations:

- American Medical Association
- U.S. Surgeon General
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- U.S. Public Health Service
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- Center for Disease Control
- National Academy of Science
- National Cancer Institute
- World Health Organization
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You Should Test for Radon

While scientists can estimate the approximate lung cancer deaths per 1000 people, no single individual's risk can be estimated. Testing is relatively inexpensive, easy and is the only way to know whether you are at risk.

If you would like a trained professional perform your test, the radon program has the names of qualified, licensed Measurement Professionals in, or near, your area. IEMA recommends professional testing in real estate transactions. If you are involved in a real estate transaction, read the Radon Testing in Real Estate Transactions, which involve multiple parties and financial interests, is unique and specific testing protocols are required.

Controlling Radon Exposure

Radon reduction techniques are used to stop radon entry and reduce indoor radon concentrations. IEMA recommends hiring a licensed Mitigation Professional to reduce your indoor radon concentrations, as you would hire a licensed plumber, HVAC or other specialist trained mitigators using specialized equipment can discover where radon is entering and advise homeowners on the best way to reduce radon concentrations. The most common technique used by radon reduction firms is called "subslab depressurization" (SSD) and does not require major renovations. Post-mitigation testing must be performed to determine the effectiveness of the mitigation system.

The cost of an active mitigation system is typically between $800 to $1200 for installation, and the energy cost for running the fan will average around $100 per year.

For individuals and companies building new homes IEMA recommends installation of Passive Radon Reduction Systems during construction; homeowner testing after taking residence; and mitigation, as indicated by the test results. The International Code Council outlined radon control methods in their *One and Two Family Dwelling Code* since 1995. Some Illinois towns concerned about residential radon concentrations have adopted the International Code, making passive radon resistant new construction mandatory for new single-family dwellings in their areas.

For radon information by telephone call (800) 325-1245 (Information Line).

Excerpts reproduced from the Illinois Emergency Management Agency website http://www.radon.illinois.gov/iema/index.asp

House Termite Inspections

A professional termite inspection is required in most states when buying or selling a home. Termites are a very serious problem and they can cause create significant damage and even destroy a home if left untreated.

In most cases if evidence of termites is seen, there's a good chance the infestation is already quite advanced.

If you are a homeowner and have any concerns about termites in home, the best course of action is to locate a pest control or termite inspection to confirm any problems. Of course, pest inspections are an important part of the overall inspection process, so make sure you hire an expert in the field.

When having a termite inspection, it is vital that this is done by a licensed professional. This inspector will look for termite infestation as well as other pest infestation, plumbing leaks, obvious roof leaks, dry rot and water damage. Make sure that all areas of the home are accessible for the inspector. Try to stick with companies that do inspection and treatment only – and leave any wood repair to carpenters or contractors.