

## For More Information Contact:

STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
Department of Public Health  
Radon Program



CT Department of Public Health  
Radon Program  
410 Capitol Avenue, MS# 12 RAD  
PO Box 340308  
Hartford, CT 06134-0308

Phone: 860-509-7299

Fax: 860-509-7295

Web: [www.ct.gov/dph/radon](http://www.ct.gov/dph/radon)



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Publication #: EPA-402-F-94-009

## Radon In Schools

Every School  
Should Take  
This  
Simple Test.



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## What You Should Know About Radon

**Chances are you've already heard of radon** - a radioactive gas that can cause lung cancer.

The EPA ranks indoor radon among the most serious environmental health problems facing us today. After smoking, it is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States causing an estimated twenty thousand (20,000) lung cancer deaths a year. It is the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers.

**Radon is a naturally occurring gas that seeps into buildings from the surrounding soil.** In some cases, well water may be a source of radon.

**Radon exposure increases your risk of lung cancer.** Radon gas decays into radioactive particles that can get trapped in your lungs when you breathe. As these particles break down, they release small bursts of energy. These bursts can damage lung tissue and lead to lung cancer over the course of your lifetime. Your risk of getting lung cancer from radon depends mostly on three factors:

1. The level of radon gas in the air you breathe;
2. The duration of exposure (how many hours you spend exposed);
3. Your smoking habits.

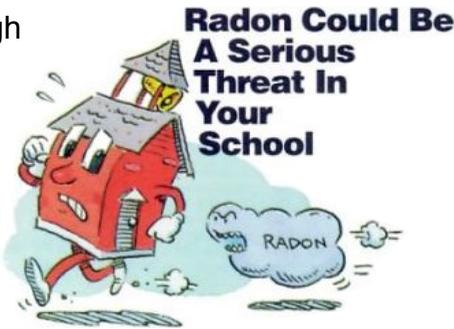
**What you might not have heard** - high levels of radon have been found in classrooms in a number of schools in Connecticut. Therefore, it is important that students, teachers, and parents are aware that a potential problem could exist in their school. A nationwide survey of radon levels in schools estimates that nearly one in five has at least one schoolroom with a short-term radon level above the action level of 4 pCi/L (picoCuries per liter) - the level at which EPA recommends that schools take action to reduce it.



## Radon in Schools

### Testing is the Only Way to Know!

Having your school tested for radon is required by law in the State of Connecticut. In fact, the only way to discover if high levels of radon are present is through testing. As real as the threat of radon is, the good news is that the problem can be solved.



### How are schools tested for radon?

Testing for radon is simple and relatively inexpensive.

### School officials will make sure to:

- Test all frequently occupied rooms on and below the ground level
- Conduct tests in the colder months of the year when school is in session
- Keep all windows shut during testing
- Communicate the results to parents, teachers and students

### As Easy as 1-2-3!

#### Step 1: Initial Testing:

- Take short-term tests

#### Step 2: Follow-up Testing:

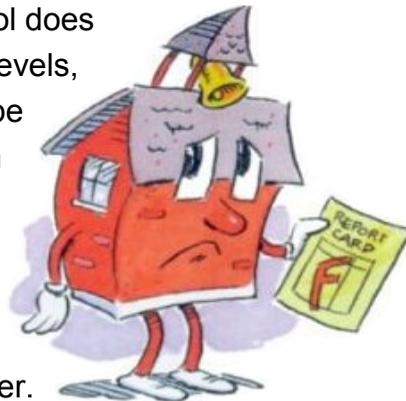
- Take a second short-term test in rooms where the initial level is 4.0 pCi/L or more

#### Step 3: Take action to reduce levels if:

- The average of the initial and follow-up short-term test is 4.0 pCi/L or more

### Four is the magic number...

If radon levels exceed 4.0 pCi/L, action should be taken to reduce radon in your school. Fortunately, even if your school does have high radon levels, the problem can be corrected. Proven techniques are available that reduce radon levels and lower risks of lung cancer.



## Radon in Homes

School isn't the only place that you, your children, or teachers can be exposed to radon.

Many people spend more time at home, where high radon levels may pose a much greater threat to their health. Test your home for radon, if you haven't already! The Surgeon General joined the EPA in issuing a national health advisory, urging us all to test our homes for radon.

*"Indoor radon gas is the second-leading cause of lung cancer in the United States and breathing it over prolonged periods can present a significant health risk to families all over the country. It's important to know that this threat is completely preventable. Radon can be detected with a simple test and fixed through well-established venting techniques."*

U.S. Surgeon General, January 2005

**Once again, testing is simple and inexpensive.** After all, radon is one health problem nobody should have to live with - at home or at school.

## In Summary

### Radon

- Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas
- Radon usually comes from soils and rock, but can also come from well water
- Breathing in radon increases your risk of lung cancer
- Testing is the only way to find out if radon is a problem

### Radon in Schools

- Testing is as easy as 1-2-3
  1. Testing must occur in all occupied spaces at or below ground level
  2. Testing must occur while school is in session
  3. If high levels of radon are found, confirm them
- Radon testing is required in public schools in Connecticut
- When high levels are found, steps will be taken to reduce radon gas in the school
- The CT Department of Public Health can provide guidance documents and information to schools, and the general public

### Radon in Your Home

- You and your children probably spend more time in your home than you do at work or school
- Test your home for radon!
- The Radon Program can provide you with a list of qualified professionals