



Press Release

Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department

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Hamilton County Residents Urged to Test Homes for Radon, the Second Leading Cause of Lung Cancer in the United States

Chattanooga, TN- The Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department is working with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in a nationwide campaign to educate Americans about the dangers of radon exposure and to encourage them to take action to protect their homes and families. In observance of National Radon Awareness Month, the Health Department is encouraging every Hamilton County resident to test their home for radon.

Radon is a naturally occurring, invisible, odorless, tasteless gas that is dispersed in outdoor air, but can reach harmful levels when trapped in buildings. Scientists have long been concerned about the health risk of radon, but never before has there been such overwhelming proof that exposure to elevated levels of radon causes lung cancer in humans.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that radon is responsible for more than 20,000 lung cancer deaths per year. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S. after smoking and the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers. "However," says Sabrina Novak, Environmental Scientist for the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department, "because you can't see or smell radon, people tend to not think about the possibility that there might be a radon problem in their homes and the health effects radon exposure can create."

Testing homes for elevated levels of radon is simple and inexpensive. Radon test kits can be purchased at local hardware and home improvement stores or directly from radon testing companies. Many are priced under \$25.00. In addition, the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation Office of Environmental Assistance's Radon Program is currently offering free radon test kits to residents. If there is an elevated level of radon in a home, levels can be lowered by a qualified contractor for a cost similar to that of many common home repairs such as painting or having a new water heater installed.

The Health Department urges Hamilton County residents to take action during this year's National Radon Action Month by testing their homes for radon. Radon poses a serious threat to our community's health but there is a straightforward solution. For more information on radon, radon testing and mitigation, and radon-resistant new construction, call Sabrina Novak at (423) 209-8390 or visit the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation website at <http://tn.gov/environment/ea/radon/>.