

# Radon

Radon is an odourless, tasteless, colourless radioactive gas that is the by-product of uranium decay. Uranium occurs naturally in soil and rock formations, and places with higher than normal uranium deposits, such as Alberta and Saskatchewan, have higher radon levels.

Radon seeps through the earth and into basements, where it can become trapped because of the efficient way our homes are sealed from the outside elements.

Prolonged exposure to radon can lead to health problems, including lung cancer. In fact, after smoking, radon gas is the leading cause of lung cancer.

Download the radon fact sheet for more information.

The Alberta Building Code 2014 included new requirements to protect homes from radon. The requirements came into effect in late 2015, and include, among other things, that new homes require a properly located radon rough-in or passive pipe in the basement, which can make it easier (and cheaper) to install a radon mitigation device in the future if it's needed.

## Testing

**Long-term testing:** tests of at least 90 days during the heating period (fall, winter, and spring) are proven to be the only reliable tests to determine radon levels.

**Short-term testing:** in Canada, some entities market and recommend short-term testing. Health Canada states short-term tests are not acceptable to assess radon levels as radon levels can vary significantly over time. Do not be misled, short-term tests do not provide buyers and sellers with an accurate indication of the likelihood of adverse radon levels.

Alberta real estate professionals are trained to inform and advise their buying clients about radon during the buying process.

## Advice for Buyers

- ask the seller if they have conducted a 90-day radon test
- if so, ask for the results of that test (if the result was 200 Becquerel or higher, the seller must disclose)
- if the seller has not conducted a radon test, talk to your real estate professional about reducing your offer by the approximate cost of radon mitigation
- alternatively, ask the seller for a holdback on your offer to purchase that will be released upon low radon test results OR in the event of a high radon test, the holdback funds will be used for radon mitigation with any funds remaining released to the seller after the mitigation device is installed
- if you buy a home that hasn't had a radon test done, we encourage you to proceed with a radon test within 90 days of possession. This is health issue, and radon testing and

mitigation is money well-spent. For more information about radon, go to Health Canada's website and search "radon."

The good news when it comes to radon is it's a solvable problem. Even if you fall in love with a home that hasn't had a radon test or the results are high, a radon mitigation device can be installed to vent radon gas outside the home from the basement. Mitigation costs vary, but are often not more than \$2,000-\$3,000. Hire a Certified Radon Technician to install the device to ensure it's done properly.