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Environment Department Offers Free Tests for Detection of Deadly Radon Gas

January is National Radon Action Month

(Santa Fe, NM) – The New Mexico Environment Department will offer free radon test kits for residents during the month of January to raise awareness about the naturally occurring radioactive gas that is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S.

Radon, which filters into homes and other buildings from the soil, causes between 15,000 and 22,000 lung cancer deaths each year in the U.S., according to reports by the National Academy of Sciences. That translates to about 60 lung cancer deaths a day in the U.S.

“Radon is invisible and odorless and often goes undetected,” said NMED Secretary Ron Curry. “Residents should make it a priority to test their homes for this deadly gas. This serious health threat can be avoided.”

Previous surveys of homes tested for radon in New Mexico found that approximately one in four — or 25 — percent exceeded the EPA’s recommended action level of 4 picocuries per liter (pCi/L) for radon.

Radon is a naturally occurring, colorless, odorless, radioactive gas that exists in most soils. Radon results from the radioactive decay of uranium in soil. Radon disperses harmlessly outdoors but can be extremely harmful when trapped in buildings. Radon enters homes and buildings from soil through basements, crawlspaces and cracks in foundations. The gas can also be present in drinking water. The breakdown of radon releases alpha, beta and gamma radiations that can damage lungs when inhaled. The only way to detect whether a home has radon is to test for it.

Radon test kits are simple to conduct and can also be purchased at hardware stores. For more information about Radon, visit <http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/nmrcb/radon.html> or <http://www.epa.gov/iaq/radon/>.

To obtain a free radon test kit, contact Michael A. Taylor, NMED Indoor Radon Outreach Coordinator at (505) 827-1093 or at Michael.Taylor@state.nm.us.

For more information contact Marissa Stone, NMED Communications Director, at (505) 827-0314 or (505) 231-0475.

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