



Bill Richardson
Governor

**NEW MEXICO
ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT**

Office of the Secretary

Harold Runnels Building
1190 Saint Francis Drive (87505)
PO Box 26110, Santa Fe, NM 87502
Phone (505) 827-2855 Fax (505) 827-2836
www.nmenv.state.nm.us



Ron Curry
Secretary
Jon Goldstein
Deputy Secretary

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Contact: Marissa Stone, NMED Communications Director
(505) 827-0314 or (505) 231-0475

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 urges residents to test their homes and businesses for naturally occurring radon – a radioactive gas that causes about 22,000 lung cancer deaths each year in the U.S. The department will offer free test kits for residents who are willing to share their test results that will become part of a statewide radon survey.

Radon, which filters into homes and other buildings from the soil, causes about seven times the estimated deaths that result from secondhand smoke.

“Radon can go undetected because it is invisible and odorless -- testing for radon is the only way it can be detected,” said New Mexico Environment Department Secretary Ron Curry. “I urge everyone to make it a priority to test their homes and workplaces for this deadly gas.”

The department, in conjunction with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, have designated January 2008 as Radon Action Month. Radon results from the radioactive decay of uranium, which exists in most soils. Radon enters homes and buildings from soil through basements, crawlspaces and cracks in foundations and slabs. The gas can also be present in drinking water, primarily from private wells. The breakdown of radon releases alpha, beta and gamma radiation damaging lung tissues when inhaled which can result in cancer.

To participate in the radon survey and to obtain a free test kit from the department, please complete the form on the department’s Web page at: <http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/nmrcb/home.html> . Then e-mail the form to Michael.Taylor@state.nm.us. Inexpensive and accurate radon kits are also available for purchase from the National Safety Council at www.nsc.org/issues/radon or at (800)557-2366.

Qualified contractors can fix existing radon problems. Homes can also be built to block the deadly gas. More information on radon is available on the NMED Web page or the EPA Web site at <http://www.epa.gov/radon>.

For more information, call Michael Taylor at (505) 827-1093.

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