

Most Radon Test Results for the County Returning At A High Level

The northeast and southeast corners of Nebraska have the highest levels of radon in the state, according to health officials with the Nebraska Health and Human Services System. Northeast and southeast Nebraska are the state's hottest "hot spots," said Sara Morgan, program manager for the Radon Program of the Nebraska Health and Human Services System. "But most of the eastern third of the state tests high for radon." "High" is considered anything above 4 picocuries per liter of air, the health standard set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The data is based on the sampling of over 26,000 residences over the past 15 years.

For Saline County residents who have conducted radon tests in their homes since this January, the results have been coming back as higher than 4 picocuries per liter. Many are testing a second time to check the accuracy of the first test results. **To encourage testing, free radon test kits are available at the UNL Extension Office in Saline County at 306 W. 3rd in Wilber. Test kits will not be mailed out of the office.** These test kits were purchased through a grant provided by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Regulation and Licensure (NDHHS-R&L) Radon Program.

Radon is the leading cause of lung cancer for people who have never smoked. It is an odorless, colorless, tasteless gas that is present in most Nebraska homes. Everyone should test for radon.

The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that approximately 21,000 lung cancer deaths each year are radon-related, second only to tobacco-related lung cancer deaths.

Radon comes from the decay of naturally occurring uranium in the earth's soil and can accumulate indoors to dangerous levels. It can enter homes through cracks or holes in concrete floors or walls, sump pits, and drinking water from private wells. Once trapped inside an enclosed space, radon can accumulate.

In Saline County the average test result is 8.8 picocuries per liter and the highest reading has been 37.1 picocuries per liter. For example, at 10 picocuries per liter, health experts say the risk of cancer from radon exposure compares to smoking 2 packs a day of cigarettes.