



State of Wisconsin  
Department of Health Services

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Jim Doyle, Governor  
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**For Immediate Release**

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## **Radon Exposure is Second Leading Cause of Lung Cancer**

### ***Exposure Ranks First Among Non-Smokers***

Noting that January is National Radon Action Month, state health officials today cited federal estimates that identify exposure to radon gas as the nation's second leading cause of lung cancer and the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers.

“Radon causes more lung cancer among non-smokers than even second-hand tobacco smoke. Fortunately, this cause of lung cancer is largely preventable,” said Dr. Seth Foldy, State Health Officer. “Radon concentrations can vary greatly from home to home and it enters buildings through their foundations.”

Radon is an odorless radioactive gas that is naturally present in the ground. Radon is not an irritant to the eyes or nose, nor is it an allergen. The only risk from radon in air is lung cancer, after many years of breathing it.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Surgeon General have summarized the radon risk based on estimates in the National Academy of Sciences report titled *Health Effects of Exposure to Radon, BEIR VI*, as well as the EPA's summary of epidemiology on second hand smoke showing radon causes about 3,000 lung cancer deaths per year among people who have never smoked.

State statistics indicate that between five and ten percent of the homes in Wisconsin have elevated airborne concentrations in significantly-occupied spaces. The only way to know the radon level in a house is to measure it. Radon concentrations can be measured with simple, inexpensive test kits available from hardware stores and local public health agencies.

Radon can be controlled in any house. More than 60 radon mitigation contractors in Wisconsin are nationally certified to install radon control systems if your home has an elevated level of radon. Thousands of systems are installed in existing homes in Wisconsin each year. If you are building a new home, state health officials recommend using the standards for green building from the National Association of Home Builders to help reduce radon entry.

Comprehensive radon information for Wisconsin is available on the Department's website at [www.lowradon.org](http://www.lowradon.org). Experts in local public health agencies can be reached toll-free statewide by dialing 1-888 LOW-RADON (1-888-569-7236).

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