



Justin Bevins
jwbevins@verizon.net
951-326-0521
<http://www.prudential.com>



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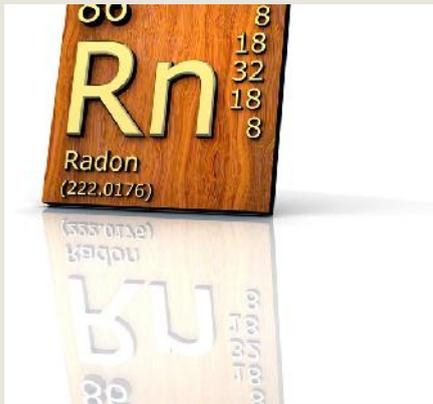
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The Truth About Radon Gas

There's a scene in "The Princess Bride" where the villainous Vizzini offers his adversary an invisible, odorless and tasteless poison. While his description is meant to conjure laughs, he could have just as easily been talking about radon gas.

You can't see, smell or taste it, yet exposure can make you sick. In fact, the Surgeon General has warned that radon is the second-leading cause of lung cancer in the United States today after smoking.



Radon comes from the natural (radioactive) breakdown of uranium in soil, rock and water and may sneak into the air you breathe by penetrating your home through cracks in the foundation. It can be discovered in all parts of the country and can cause a dangerous high indoor radon level in any home. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, roughly one out of every 15 homes in the U.S. is estimated to have elevated radon levels.

While it's not a requirement that you test for radon when you make an offer to buy a home in many places, it's a good idea to ask for a Radon Inspection Contingency. It can put some structure into getting a "short-term" test done on any home to make sure the lowest levels of radon of the home are below 4.0 pCi/L—a target set by Congress for indoor air quality. The EPA enforces that mandate.

If you are preparing to sell your home, you should test for radon before you even put it on the market. This can save valuable time during a real estate transaction, as long as you have all the paperwork and testing data to show the prospective buyer.

The quickest way to detect radon is with short-term tests, which remain in your home for two to 90 days, depending on the device. The most common detectors are charcoal canisters, alpha track, electret ion chamber, continuous monitors and charcoal liquid scintillation.

Test in the lowest level of your home that you currently live in, or a lower level not currently used, but which a buyer could use for living space without making renovations. Elevated radon levels can be remedied with a radon-reduction system, which can reduce the gas by up to 99% percent and cost less than \$1,000 to buy and install.

Buyers and sellers should be smart about radon. Every new home should be tested after occupancy, even if it was built radon-resistant or with a radon reducing system installed.