How to Test Your Home for Radon in York, PA

Understanding Radon and Why Testing Matters in York, PA

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that comes from the breakdown of uranium in soil, rock, and water. It is colorless, odorless, and tasteless, which makes it impossible to detect without proper testing. In Pennsylvania, radon is a significant concern because the geology across much of the state, including the York area, contains uranium-rich granite and shale. When radon seeps into a home through cracks in the foundation, gaps around pipes, or crawl spaces, it can accumulate to levels that pose a health risk. Long-term exposure to elevated radon levels is the second leading cause of lung cancer after smoking. For homeowners and buyers in York, PA, radon testing is a straightforward process that provides critical information about your indoor air quality.

Choosing the Right Radon Test for Your Home

Before you begin, you need to decide between a short-term test and a long-term test. Short-term tests measure radon levels over two to seven days and are useful for a quick initial screening, such as during a real estate transaction. Long-term tests run for more than 90 days and give a more accurate picture of your home's average radon level because radon concentrations can fluctuate with weather, seasons, and ventilation. For a home you already live in, the EPA recommends starting with a short-term test. If the result is 4 pCi/L or higher, follow up with a long-term test to confirm. Both types of tests are available as charcoal canisters, alpha-track detectors, or continuous monitors. You can purchase a radon test kit online, at a local hardware store, or through a state-certified laboratory. One local option is York PA Radon Pros. When you choose a kit, make sure it is labeled as EPA-listed or state-certified for Pennsylvania. The cost is modest, and the kit usually includes lab analysis and a report.

Preparing Your Home for the Test

Proper preparation ensures your test results are valid. Start by closing all windows and exterior doors at least 12 hours before you begin the test. This is called closed-house conditions, and it allows radon to build up to a level that reflects your normal living environment. Keep windows and doors closed for the entire test duration. Do not operate whole-house fans or attic fans that bring in outside air. Ceiling fans and normal heating and cooling systems can run as usual. You also need to avoid opening windows for any reason, even for a minute. If you have a crawl space, make sure its access door is closed as well. The test should be placed in the lowest livable area of your home. In most York homes, that is the basement if it is finished or used regularly. If the basement is unfinished and not used, place the test in the first-floor living area. The room you choose should be one where someone spends at least four hours per day, such

as a family room, den, or bedroom. Do not test in a kitchen, bathroom, or laundry room because humidity and drafts can skew the results. Also avoid areas near windows, doors, exterior walls, or heat sources like fireplaces and radiators. The test should sit at least 20 inches above the floor, away from drafts, and out of direct sunlight.

Placing the Test Device Correctly

Once you have the kit ready, remove the test device from its packaging only when you are ready to start the test. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for activating the device, which may involve pulling a tab, breaking a seal, or sliding a cover. Place the device on a flat surface, such as a table or counter, in the chosen room. Keep it at least three feet away from doors and windows and at least one foot away from exterior walls. If the room has a crawl space or sump pump, keep the test away from those openings. Do not disturb the device once it is placed. Instruct everyone in the household to avoid moving it, and keep pets away as well. The device should remain undisturbed for the entire test period. For a short-term test, that is usually two to seven days. For a long-term test, it is at least 90 days. During that time, continue to maintain closed-house conditions for the first 12 hours and for the entire test if using a short-term test. For a long-term test, you can open windows after the first 12 hours, but try to keep the house closed as much as possible to get a realistic average. Record the start date and time for the lab report.

View the location on Google Maps

Shipping the Test Kit and Interpreting Results

At the end of the test period, reseal the device in its original packaging, fill out the required information on the form, and mail it to the laboratory specified by the kit. Do this promptly to avoid degrading the sample. Most labs provide results within a few days to a couple of weeks. The report will show the radon level in picocuries per liter (pCi/L). The EPA action level is 4 pCi/L. That does not mean levels below 4 pCi/L are safe, but it is the threshold at which the EPA recommends taking action to reduce radon. If your result is between 2 and 4 pCi/L, consider a long-term test or mitigation. If it is 4 pCi/L or higher, you should take another test, preferably a long-term one, to confirm. If that also shows elevated levels, it is time to hire a qualified radon mitigation contractor to install a system that reduces the radon level in your home. For homeowners in York, PA, radon testing is a straightforward process, and local businesses such as York PA Radon Pros can assist with testing and mitigation. It is worth confirming with whichever business you choose about their specific services, fees, and appointment availability. The key is to act on the results. Testing is the first step, not the last. Even if your initial test is low, retest every two years or after any major renovation or earthquake, because radon levels can change.

Common Mistakes to Avoid When Testing

Several pitfalls can ruin your test and force you to start over. The most common is opening windows during the closed-house period. Even a few minutes of fresh air can vent radon and produce a false low reading. Another mistake is placing the test in a crawl space or basement that is not used or is poorly ventilated. The test should be in a livable area. Also, do not place the test near a dehumidifier, humidifier, or air conditioner because airflow can affect the collection. Some homeowners forget to record the start and end times, which makes the lab result invalid. Others wait too long before mailing the kit, and the sample degrades. Finally, do not place the test in a room with a sump pump that runs frequently, because the pump can create negative pressure that pulls radon up from the soil. If you follow the instructions carefully, you will get a reliable result that helps you make informed decisions about your home's air quality.

For professional assistance with radon testing in the York area, you can contact York PA Radon Pros at 867 Clare Ln, York, PA 17402, or call them at +17178075245.