

Radon is a radioactive gas found in nature. It has no color, odor or taste and is chemically inert. Its source is natural uranium in the earth. As the uranium molecule slowly decays, it forms lead and radon gas as by-products. Being a gas, radon moves upward out of the soil and into the atmosphere. Uranium is found in most soils and in granite. Radon moves from uranium-bearing granite deposits in the soil to atmosphere because there is a lower concentration of radon in the atmosphere than in the soil. Your home is sited in its path, and because the house is usually warmer than the surrounding soil, the air pressure is less and soil gases, including radon, move into the home. The most common routes are:

- spaces between basement walls and slab
- cracks in foundations and/or walls
- openings around sump pumps and drains
- construction joints
- crawl spaces
- showers, etc. using well water with high radon concentrations

Excessive radon levels have been found in all of the 50 states. In Mississippi less than three

percent of the homes have radon levels in excess of the EPA recommended action level of 4 picoCuries of radon per liter of air.

Radon comes from the natural (radioactive) breakdown of uranium in soil, rock and water and gets into the air you breathe. Radon can be found all over the U.S. It can get into any type of building — homes, offices, and schools — and result in a high indoor radon level. You can't see radon. And you can't smell it or taste it.

Radon is estimated to cause many thousands of deaths each year. That's because when you breathe air containing radon, you can get lung cancer. In fact, the Surgeon General has warned that radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States today. Only smoking causes more lung cancer deaths. If you smoke and your home has high radon levels, the risk of lung cancer is especially high.

If you have any questions, or want more information on radon or radon testing,

call the Radon Information Line: 1-800-626-7739 or contact:

[MS Radon Program](#)

MS Department of Health

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