



Promoting and Protecting Public Health

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Douglas County Health Department Offers Free Radon Testing

The safety and health of eastern Douglas County residents is expected to improve under a new radon testing grant from the National Association of County Officials (NACO).

The grant provides the Douglas County Health Department with 200 radon testing kits to be distributed free through neighborhood associations east of 42nd Street in Omaha. Homes tend to be older in that area and radon is more likely to be found.

“Testing is the only way to know if your home has a radon problem,” said Douglas County Health Director Dr. Adi Pour. “While the problem may be more common in older homes, your home’s age and style don’t matter. Every home should be tested for radon.”

A naturally occurring, invisible and odorless radioactive gas, radon originates from natural deposits of radium and uranium in the soil. As these compounds decay, radon gas is formed that can enter a home, often via problems with indoor air pressures that allow the gas to move into the basement through the foundation.

Second only to smoking as a cause of lung cancer, radon is the leading cause of lung cancer among nonsmokers. The United States Environmental Protection Agency ranks radon in the same category as tobacco among those agents with the highest cancer-causing potential. According to the EPA, radon annually is responsible for about 21,000 lung cancer deaths.

Radon can be found throughout the United States, but the EPA has recognized Eastern Nebraska as having some of the country’s most elevated radon levels.

“Anyone living in the inner city should consider taking advantage of this grant to ensure the health and safety of their family,” Dr. Pour said.

Interested neighborhood associations and environmental groups are asked to call the Douglas County Health Department’s Environmental Health Section at 444-7485 for information on a free radon testing kit. They will be distributed on a first come, first served basis.

Anyone living outside the grant area is encouraged to contact the Nebraska Radon Program, 301 Centennial Mall South, Lincoln, NE 68509. Test kits are \$5 and include analysis. Checks should be made out to Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

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