



**PRESS RELEASE FOR LOCAL MEDIA**  
Central Michigan District Health Department  
*"Promoting Healthy Families, Healthy Communities"*  
For more information, please call: (989) 773-5921 ext. 109  
2012 E. Preston Avenue, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan 48858, [www.cmdhd.org](http://www.cmdhd.org)

### **Radon Awareness Week**

October 21-27, 2007 is Radon Awareness Week. Michelle Patton, Director of the Environmental Health Division of the Central Michigan District Health Department, invites you and your family to join others in taking the "test" for radon in your home. Radon is a cancer-causing radioactive gas. You cannot see, smell, or taste radon, but it may be a problem in your home. When you breathe air which contains radon, you increase your risk of getting lung cancer. In fact, the Surgeon General says that "indoor radon is the second-leading cause of lung cancer in the United States and breathing it over prolonged periods can present a significant health risk to families all over the country." More than 20,000 Americans will die each year of radon-related lung cancer. If you smoke and your home has high radon levels, your risk of lung cancer is especially high.

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas resulting from the natural breakdown of uranium. Most soils contain varying amounts of uranium. Radon in soil, groundwater, or building materials, enters working and living spaces and begins to disintegrate into its decay product. This decay product can attach to the surface of aerosols, dusts, and smoke particles. These particles then may be inhaled, whereby becoming deeply lodged or trapped in the lungs.

Radon and its decay products are more concentrated in confined air spaces. "For this reason, radon levels are typically higher in homes during the winter months when doors and windows are closed more often and air circulation is poor," says Director Patton.

Radon is a national environmental health problem. Elevated radon levels have been discovered in virtually every state. The EPA estimates that as many as 8 million homes



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throughout the country have elevated levels of radon. State surveys to date show that 1 out of 5 homes have elevated radon levels.

<b>% of local homes tested that have elevated levels of radon.</b>			
Arenac	2.9%	Isabella	12.5%
Clare	10.7%	Osceola	9.1%
Gladwin	11.2%	Roscommon	5.8%

Indoor radon has been judged to be the most serious environmental cancer-causing agent to which the general public is exposed and which the EPA must address.

Some scientific studies of radon exposure indicate that children may be more sensitive to radon. This may be due to their higher respiration rate and their rapidly dividing cells, which may be more vulnerable to radiation damage.

According to Patton, testing is the only way to know your home is safe from high radon levels. Contrary to popular belief, “radon exposure **does not** cause headaches, nausea, fatigue, or skin rashes like other environmental toxins,” states Patton. There are no immediate symptoms that will alert you to the presence of radon. It typically takes years of exposure before any problems surface and then it is too late. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Surgeon General, American Lung Association, American Medical Association, and National Safety Council all recommend testing your home for radon.

Radon tests are easy to do and are available at your local health department. Patton announced that during the month of October, test kits may be purchased for only half the regular price. Simply save the coupon printed in this newspaper or visit Central Michigan District



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Health Department’s website at <http://www.cmdhd.org> to see locations of our six county offices and to print a copy of the coupon. Bring either coupon with you to your local health department office to obtain your test kit.

More general radon information is available by calling the Central Michigan District Health Department or visiting the Environmental Protection Association (EPA) Website at <http://www.epa.gov/iaq/radon/>

This article has been brought to you by Central Michigan District Health Department, which serves the residents of Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola, and Roscommon Counties.