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*“Radon in Your Home”*

January is National Radon Action Month, a time to raise awareness about radon and encourage homeowners to take action to protect their families. Radon is a naturally occurring, colorless, odorless, and tasteless radioactive gas produced by the decay of uranium in the earth’s crust. It is present everywhere, but the amount of radon in the soil varies based on soil chemistry, which can differ greatly from one home to the next. Radon levels in soil can range from a few hundred to several thousand picocuries per liter (pCi/L).

The amount of radon that enters a home depends on various factors, including weather conditions, soil porosity and moisture, and air pressure differences within the house. Homes often act like large chimneys, as warm air rises and escapes through attic openings and upper-level windows, a slight suction is created at the lowest level of the home. This suction pulls radon gas from the soil into the house through cracks in foundations, sump pots, crawl spaces, and other openings. In Kansas, radon is a significant concern. Over 41% of Kansas homes that have been tested report radon levels at or above 4.0 pCi/L, the level at which the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends taking action.

Long-term exposure to elevated indoor radon levels increases the risk of developing lung cancer. Radon is the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers and the second leading cause overall. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) estimates that up to 200 new cases of radon-related lung cancer occur each year in Kansas. When radon gas decays, it releases small, heavy, electrically charged subatomic particles called alpha particles. If these particles strike the cells lining the lungs, they can damage chromosomes and alter how cells reproduce. Although the body’s immune system can often destroy these damaged cells, some may survive and multiply over 10 to 20 years, eventually developing into cancer.

The good news is that radon exposure is preventable. Testing is the only way to know whether your home has elevated radon levels. Radon test kits are affordable, easy to use, and widely available. The Greenwood County Extension Office has radon test kits available for purchase. You can also find additional testing resources at [KansasRadonProgram.org](http://KansasRadonProgram.org) or by calling 800-693-5343. If elevated radon levels are detected, radon mitigation systems can effectively reduce indoor radon concentrations, often by up to 99%. These systems work by safely venting radon gas from beneath the home to the outside, preventing it from entering living spaces. Mitigation is a proven, long-term solution and should be installed by a certified radon mitigation professional.

Information comes from Kansas State University Publications.

Looking for practical ways to simplify mealtime? Join us for Freezer Meals & Meal Prep Basics on February 5<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 PM at the Eureka United Methodist Church. Learn various meal-prepping techniques and prepare two freezer-friendly recipes to take home! Contact the GW Co. Extension Office to RSVP by February 3<sup>rd</sup>.