



Vermont Schools: Get the Facts about Radon



Radon is a cancer-causing, naturally-occurring radioactive gas.

- Radon exposure is the **number one** cause of lung cancer among non-smokers.
- It is the second leading cause of lung cancer.
- Lung cancer is the only known effect on human health from exposure to radon in air.
- No level of radon exposure is deemed safe.

Radon can be found all over the United States, including Vermont.

- It is found in the earth's rock and soil.
- It is formed by the natural breakdown of uranium (an element).
- Radon gas seeps into buildings, including schools, through cracks and openings in the foundation.

Children are particularly vulnerable to radon exposure¹.

- Due to lung shape and size differences, children have higher estimated radiation doses than adults. Children also have breathing rates faster than those of adults.
- Risk of lung cancer in children resulting from exposure to radon may be almost twice as high as the risk to adults exposed to the same amount of radon.
- If children are also exposed to tobacco smoke, the risk of getting lung cancer increases at least 20 times.

Schools should test for radon.

- The U.S Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) ranks indoor radon among the most serious environmental health problems facing us today.
- Radon is colorless and odorless; the only way to know it is a problem is to test for it.

¹ Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, Environmental Health and Education
<https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/csem/csem.asp?csem=8&po=7>

- Almost 14% of Vermont schools that have tested for radon since 2005 have radon levels above the EPA action level, **with some as high as five times the action level.**²

It's time for Vermont to require radon testing and disclosure in all public schools:

- Since 2001, the Vermont Department of Health, through its Envision program, offers free radon testing to Vermont Schools. As of 2017, only 74 of 297 schools have tested.
- Testing results must be disclosed to inform the public of a potential health risk.

Schools can – and should - fix a radon problem:

- The EPA has set an action guideline of 4 picocuries per liter or higher.
- There are a variety of methods used to reduce indoor radon levels.
- The cost benefit of reducing the risk of lung cancer for children and staff far outweighs the cost to mitigate radon in a school.
- This simple and effective prevention tool reduces the risk of lung cancer for Vermont children and school staff.

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For more information about radon, visit:

The United States Environmental Protection Agency
<https://www.epa.gov/iaq-schools/managing-radon-schools>

The Vermont Department of Health
<http://www.healthvermont.gov/environment/school/radon-schools>

The American Lung Association, www.lung.org

² Vermont Department of Health, Radon in Schools, <http://www.healthvermont.gov/environment/school/radon-schools>