## 

### Media Information

##### Eolas do na Meáin

## Environmental Protection Agency

## An Ghníomhaireacht um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil

**European Radon Day:**

**EPA urges people in County Wicklow to test their homes for cancer-causing radon gas**

* Radon is a radioactive, cancer-causing gas
* 300 lung cancer cases in Ireland each year are linked to exposure to radon
* The risk of developing radon related lung cancer is particularly high for smokers. In fact, smokers are at about twenty-five times greater risk than non-smokers
* It is easy to test your home for this indoor air pollutant and to reduce high levels
* The highest results for a home tested in Co. Wicklow last year had over 19 times the acceptable level of radon; this level could give a radiation dose equivalent to receiving 13 chest X-rays a day.

**26 October 2020:** For European Radon Day, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is calling on all householders in County Wicklow to test their homes for this cancer-causing radioactive gas. Radon is the second biggest cause of lung cancer after smoking. In Ireland, it is estimated that about 300 lung cancer cases each year are linked to radon exposure.

Radon gas can seep into your home through small cracks and gaps in the foundations of the building or openings around service pipes. It comes from the rocks and soil in the ground under your home. Radon has no colour, taste or smell, so the only way to know how much of this pollutant is in your home is to carry out a radon test. The test costs about €50 and is all done by post using one of the [services registered with the EPA](https://www.epa.ie/radiation/meas/radon/services/apply/). The test kit includes two radon detectors - one should be placed in the bedroom and one in the living room. After three months, the detectors are posted back to the provider and analysed to see how much radon they have been exposed to in your home. The results are posted back to you, with advice on how to deal with any high radon readings.

Stephanie Long, Manager of the EPA’s Radon programme said:

“Exposure to high levels of radon can cause lung cancer and many families are unknowingly living with this indoor air pollutant. Last year, two homes in Co. Wicklow were found to have extremely high levels of radon, the highest of which had over 19 times the acceptable level. Living with this level of radon gives a radiation dose equivalent to getting 13 chest x-rays a day.”

You can visit [www.radon.ie](http://www.radon.ie) to find out how to test your home and keep you and your family safe. Reducing radon levels is simple and inexpensive and will immediately reduce the risk of developing lung cancer. For moderate levels of radon, improving indoor ventilation may reduce the level by up to half, the cost of which is low. For higher levels, a fan assisted ‘sump’ can be installed which can reduce radon levels by over 90 per cent. The sump can be installed in a day by a contractor with little disruption to the home.

Alison Dowdall of the EPA added,

“Radon is everywhere but is only a problem if it is ignored. Testing for radon - where high levels are found- and fixing the problem are both relatively straightforward and easy to do. Now more than ever, as people spend more time at home, we would urge everyone to take action on radon, improve your indoor air quality and keep your home safe from this cancer-causing gas.

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**Notes to the Editor:**

**What is Radon?**

Radon is a radioactive gas formed in the ground from the radioactive decay of uranium which is present in all rocks and soils. It has no smell, colour or taste and can only be detected using radon detectors. Outdoors, radon quickly dilutes to harmless levels but when it enters an enclosed space, such as a house or other building, it can accumulate to unacceptably high levels. Radon is a lung carcinogen and is linked to some 300 lung cancer cases each year in Ireland making it a serious public health hazard.

About a third of Ireland is classified as a high radon area by the EPA. However, the EPA recommends that homeowners in all areas of Ireland test their homes for radon. You can check if you are living in a high radon area on the EPA’s interactive radon risk map on [www.radon.ie](http://www.radon.ie). Ireland has relatively high indoor radon levels, with an average indoor level of 77 Bq/m3, compared to the worldwide average of 39 Bq/m3. The reference or acceptable level of radon is 200 Bq/m3.

**Testing a home**Two small detectors are sent to your home, one is placed in the bedroom and one in the living room, the rooms most occupied by the family. After three months they are returned to the service provider for analysis. The results will be sent to you together with some advice on what to do next. The whole process is done by post and there is no need for anyone to visit your home.

**Where can I get a radon test**You can find a list of EPA registered radon measurement services and details about how to test and fix your home on [www.radon.ie](http://www.radon.ie). Radon testing costs on average €50.

**What can be done to reduce high radon levels in a home?**Radon problems in a home can be fixed easily, relatively inexpensively and usually without disruption to the household. A booklet entitled [Understanding Radon Remediation – A Householder’s Guide](http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/radiation/understandingradonremediation.html) and this [video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YREqdkDaru4&list=PLFesobjWT1FhjQuTBjZFZv6zq4yPwE3B8&index=2) will help you learn more about the solutions available and how best to deal with the problem.

**How are new homes protected from radon?**

The Building Regulations require that all new homes built since 1998 in High Radon Areas are installed with a radon membrane However, having a radon membrane is not a guarantee that a home will have low levels of radon. Therefore, even homes with radon membranes installed should be tested for radon. All new homes are also installed with a standby radon sump which can be activated if necessary.

**What is European Radon Day?**

The EPA is the national competent authority for matters to do with public and worker exposure to ionising radiation. Over the last number of years, the EPA has held a public information campaign to mark European Radon Day (7th November). European Radon Day marks the birthday of Marie Curie, who won two Nobel prizes for her work on radioactivity.

**The National Radon Control Strategy**

To address radon as a public health hazard, the Government published its first  [National Radon Control Strategy](https://www.epa.ie/radon/getinformed/nationalradoncontrolstrategy/) (NRCS) in 2014. The aim of the strategy is to reduce the number of lung cancer cases in Ireland. In February 2019, new legislation was put in place which requires Ireland to have a national radon action plan. The second phase of the NRCS was launched in May 2019 and addresses this requirement. The NRCS is implemented by a Cross-Government group led by the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications.