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<http://www.oregon.gov/oha/ERD/Pages/DataShowOregonElevatedIndoorRadonLevelHighRiskAreas.aspx>]

# Data show areas of Oregon at high risk for elevated indoor radon levels

January 30, 2018

## *State program urges home testing for cancer-causing gas*

New data show that many regions of Oregon are at moderate risk of having elevated radon levels, as well as several high-risk areas.

The data, displayed in a map on the Oregon Health Authority's [radon information web page](#), reinforce the importance of testing for radon in the home.

"The take-home message is that every home needs to be tested, regardless of where it is located," said Kari Christensen, Radon Program coordinator at the Oregon Health Authority Public Health Division. "You may have the only house on the block with elevated radon levels."

The Radon Program collects radon test data from test kit manufacturers in an effort to understand which areas of the state have the potential for high radon levels. This allows the program to identify areas where educational outreach efforts need to be focused.

To get a better understanding of the radon risk in areas where data is limited, the OHA Radon Program offers free radon test kits. Those living in ZIP codes where there are fewer than 20 test results, indicated by the lighter shades of color on the map, can send an email to [radon.program@state.or.us](mailto:radon.program@state.or.us) to receive instructions on how to get a free test kit, which will be provided while supplies last.

"Our map indicates that radon is found in homes all across Oregon. However, there are many ZIP codes where we have little or no test data," Christensen said, noting that areas with no color on the map are those with insufficient data.

The OHA Radon Program is joining the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in urging Oregonians to take action and test their homes. Testing homes for radon is simple and inexpensive. Radon test kits can be purchased at local hardware and home improvement stores, or online from radon test kit supply companies or the American Lung Association. Many test kits are priced between \$15 and \$25.

The best time to test for radon is during the heating season—the winter months—when windows and doors are closed up tight. This is when you would expect to find the highest radon levels in your home.

According to the 2017 data, much of the state is at some risk of at least moderately high radon levels, particularly in northwest, central and northeastern Oregon. Within these regions are pockets where high radon levels are common, such as the Portland metro, Clatskanie and La Grande areas.

Radon levels vary throughout Oregon depending on the underlying geology. Over the past two years, the OHA Radon Program collaborated with the Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI) in developing a statewide radon potential map. The new map incorporates geologic data and OHA's data on indoor radon to show areas where the underlying geology is more likely to produce radon. Radon potential information is viewable in the [online Oregon HazVu map](#).

Radon problems can be fixed by qualified contractors for a cost similar to that of many common home repairs, such as painting or installing a new water heater. Financial assistance may be available to qualifying homeowners, who can visit the OHA [radon mitigation web page](#) for more information.

Radon is odorless, tasteless and invisible. It is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that comes up from the ground and is drawn into buildings, where it can build up to dangerous levels. The EPA estimates that radon is responsible for more than 20,000 lung cancer deaths per year in the United States. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S. after cigarette smoking, and the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers.

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