REAL ESTATE EDUCATION SERIES

RE/MAX Properties

Understanding Radon and Testing

An invisible gas - a measurable risk - practical next steps

Doug Petersen
Broker Associate | RE/MAX Properties

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas produced as uranium breaks down in soil and rock. It can enter a home through foundation openings and build up indoors. You cannot see, smell, or taste it; testing is the only way to know the radon level in a home.

01 Why testing matters

Long-term exposure increases lung cancer risk; smoking adds to that risk. Test older and newer homes, including homes with radon-resistant features. A nearby home's result cannot establish your home's level. Include radon testing in your purchase planning rather than assuming a general inspection covers it.

02 Short-term tests: quicker information

These tests run for 2 to 90 days, depending on the device. Charcoal kits and electret devices are examples; some require laboratory analysis. Follow the specified duration and return kits promptly. A short test is useful when time is limited, but may need follow-up.

03 Long-term tests: a better annual picture

Tests lasting more than 90 days, often using alpha-track or electret detectors, better reflect year-round average exposure and seasonal variation. They are useful for ongoing monitoring when a purchase deadline does not require faster results.

04 Continuous monitors: time-by-time readings

Professional continuous radon monitors record levels over time and are commonly used for at least 48 hours in real estate testing. Ask about calibration, test conditions, and interference detection. Consumer monitors can help track trends; do not assume every device meets transaction-testing requirements.

05 Good placement and conditions matter

Follow the device instructions and testing protocol. For a purchase, test the lowest level suitable for occupancy. Keep windows and exterior doors closed except normal entry and exit; short tests under four days require 12 hours of closed-house conditions beforehand. Do not move or disturb the device.

06 Review results and plan the next step

Results are reported in pCi/L (picocuries per liter). EPA recommends mitigation at 4 pCi/L or higher and considering mitigation between 2 and 4; below 4 is not risk-free. Discuss confirmation testing or mitigation with a qualified professional, using the correct protocol for your test and situation.

ELEVATED RADON CAN USUALLY BE REDUCED

A mitigation system often uses a fan and piping to draw soil gas from beneath the home and vent it outside. In Colorado, hire a state-licensed radon professional. Test after mitigation and periodically afterward. Ask Doug Petersen to coordinate testing within your contract deadlines.

Doug Petersen | 970-290-3000 | Sources: EPA buyer/seller radon guide; EPA action levels; Colorado radon professionals. Educational summary. Each office independently owned and operated.