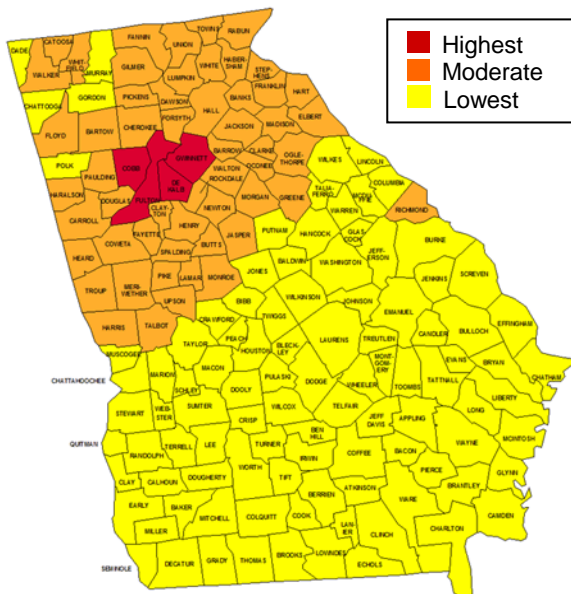


## What is Radon?

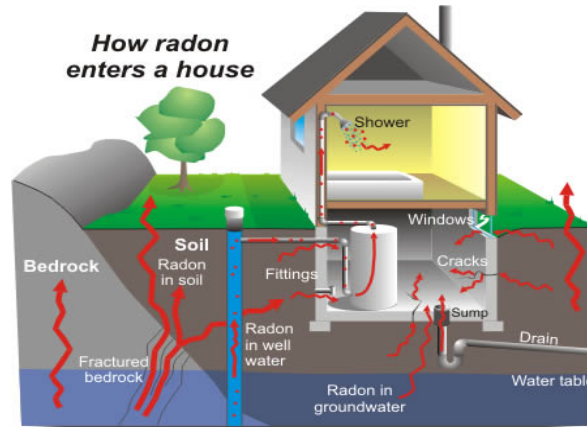
Radon is a colorless, odorless gas that comes from the decay of the natural radioactive element, uranium, found in some soils and rocks. Radon gas goes through radioactive decay and emits particles that can be harmful to the human body, primarily the lungs. It is the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers. Radon can be found all over the U.S. in varying amounts. It can get into any type of building and build up, resulting in a high indoor radon level.

## Radon in Georgia

Radon gas is more common in northern Georgia because of geology and soil composition. Most uranium in Georgia is found in this region, especially in the Metro Atlanta area.



**The potential for elevated levels of radon for Georgia counties.**



**Radon gas enters a home from the ground through cracks in the foundation.**

## How Can I be Exposed to Radon?

People can be exposed to radon gas from breathing air or from drinking water. Radon is most harmful to people when it is breathed in. Radon gets into homes and other buildings through cracks or openings in foundations. If not ventilated outside property, it can build up to harmful levels.

Radon gas can also get into the air of homes from private well water contaminated with radon, mostly during bathing, cleaning, and cooking.

## Health Effects of Radon

Radon causes lung cancer. More than 20,000 Americans die of radon-related lung cancer every year. If you smoke, your risk of lung cancer from radon exposure is much higher. Radon in drinking water is much less of a health risk than radon in air.

Radon gas is heavier than air. Small children are at greater risk for radon exposure because they breathe air closer to the ground where levels are highest, and they breathe a greater volume of air in relation to their body size.

## How do I test for radon?

Testing the home is the only way to know if you are being exposed to unsafe levels of radon. According to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency about one in every 15 homes has a radon level at or above the recommended action level. It is possible for homes next door to each other to have different radon levels.

Testing is inexpensive and easy. Radon can be detected with a simple test and fixed through inexpensive and established methods.

***Radon exposure is entirely preventable by testing indoor air for radon, and taking appropriate measures to reduce radon levels.***

There are many kinds of low-cost, "do-it-yourself" radon test kits that you can get through the mail and in hardware stores and other retail outlets. Or, you can hire a certified contractor to do the testing for you.

You can test for radon by using both short term tests (two to 90 days) and long-term tests (more than 90 days). If you need results quickly, a short-term test followed by a second short-term test may be used to decide whether to fix your home. Long-term tests give a better understanding of radon levels in a home throughout the year.

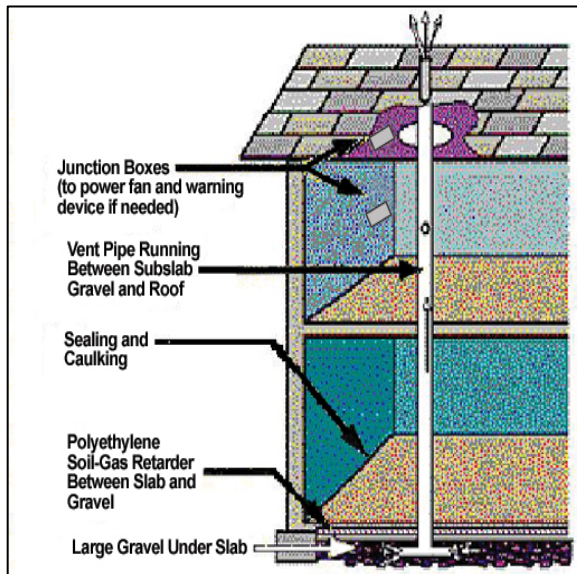
The National Safety Council offers short- and long-term radon test kits and includes laboratory analysis and return postage. Download a coupon at [www.epa.gov/radon/radontest.html](http://www.epa.gov/radon/radontest.html). Kits can also be ordered from the Safety Council Helpline at (800) 557-2366 (credit cards only).

## Reducing Radon Levels

Radon cannot be removed from the environment, but should be vented to outdoor air. Homes with radon test results at or above the recommended radon action level of 4 picoCuries per liter (pCi/L) of air are considered high and should be fixed.

The radon level can be lowered by sealing cracks and openings in a building's foundation. Open windows and use exhaust fans to reduce exposure until reduction activities are complete. If necessary, a radon reduction system can be permanently installed.

To speak to a qualified radon mitigation expert, please contact the National Radon Proficiency Program, the leading certification program for radon professionals in the United States. They can be contacted through their Web site: at [www.nhrpp.org](http://www.nhrpp.org) or by phone at (800) 269-4174.



The contractor should inspect your home's structure before giving you an estimate.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

**Georgia Division of Public Health  
Environmental Health Branch**  
Chemical Hazards Program  
(404) 657-6534

[www.health.state.ga.us/programs/hazards](http://www.health.state.ga.us/programs/hazards)

**The University of Georgia  
Cooperative Extension**  
Radon Education Program  
1-800-ASK-UGA1

[www.fcs.uga.edu/ext/housing/radon](http://www.fcs.uga.edu/ext/housing/radon)

**Southface Energy Institute**  
Outside Atlanta 1-800-745-0037  
Atlanta Area 404-872-3549, Ext. #148  
[www.southface.org](http://www.southface.org)

**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**  
Radon Program  
[www.epa.gov/radon](http://www.epa.gov/radon)

# RADON AND PUBLIC HEALTH



**CHEMICAL HAZARDS PROGRAM**  
**Environmental Health Branch**



**GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF  
COMMUNITY HEALTH**  
*Division of Public Health*