

GUIDELINES FOR RADON TESTING IN NEW JERSEY

Who can test?

New Jersey law limits who can perform radon testing. A buyer under contract to purchase a home must hire a professional to test. The buyer does not yet own the house and therefore cannot perform any portion of a test (e.g., picking up the canister and mailing it to the laboratory for analysis). A certified radon professional must be responsible for doing the entire test. Similarly, the current homeowner may not perform any portion of the test since it is the buyer who contracted for the test, not the homeowner. It follows that any real estate agent is precluded from performing **any** portion of a test contracted by either the buyer or the homeowner and that includes closing the test device, picking it up and sealing it.

Where to place the test

The radon/radon progeny measurement device should be placed as follows:

C Place the test on the lowest livable level of the house -- that is, the lowest level that **could** be used as living space. A crawl space is not a livable area, but an unfinished basement would be a livable space, even if it isn't being used right now.

C Place the test where it will not be disturbed during the measurement period.

C The device should be placed at least 20 inches above the floor and at least four inches away from other objects. If the detector must be suspended, it should be in the general breathing zone.

C Avoid areas with drafts from heating, ventilating and air conditioning vents, doors, fans and windows. Avoid areas near excessive heat, such as fireplaces or in direct sunlight and areas of high humidity, such as bathrooms or kitchens.

C If there are no openings in the exterior wall, the device should not be placed within one foot of that wall. Otherwise, the measurement device should not be placed within three feet of windows or other openings in the exterior wall.

C Measurements should not be made in kitchens, laundry rooms, closets, bathrooms or crawlspaces.

Following these criteria allows air to move freely around the test device. Also, this lessens the influence of artificial air flows (from heating, ventilating and air conditioning vents), which could either raise or lower the radon concentration.

What are “closed-house conditions”?

Closed-house conditions require that every window and door (that can let outside air enter the home), on **every** level of the house, be closed during the testing period except for normal entering or exiting of the home. These conditions are needed to stabilize the radon and radon decay product concentrations and increase the reliability of the measurement.

The U. S. EPA guidance document on radon testing provides the following guidelines. Guidelines are listed for closed-house conditions during a short-term test (lasting up to and including ninety days). A long-term test (longer than ninety days) should be conducted under normal living conditions.

C In tests lasting less than four days (96 hours), closed-house conditions must be maintained for at least 12 hours **before** starting the test.

C In tests lasting between four and seven days, closed-house conditions should be maintained while the test is in progress. While recommended, the 12-hour closed-house condition before the start of the test is not required.

C In tests lasting more than seven days and less than 90 days, closed-house conditions should be maintained as much as possible while the test is in progress.

The following measurement conditions must also exist during the measurement period:

C Internal-external air exchange systems (other than a furnace), such as high-volume attic and window fans, should not be used at least 12 hours prior to and during the test period. Air-conditioning systems that recycle interior air may be used. Normal operation of permanently installed air-to-air heat exchangers may also continue during closed-house conditions.

C In buildings where radon mitigation systems have been installed, these systems should be kept running during the test.

C Short-term tests lasting less than three days should not be conducted if a severe storm with winds greater than 30 miles per hour or rapidly changing barometric pressure is predicted during the measurement period.

Conducting a short term radon test in a home not closed 12 hours prior to testing

If a radon tester comes to a house to place a short-term test lasting three days or less and notices that the windows are still open, what should the tester do? The tester's options are: (1) Inform the homeowner that closed-house conditions were not met and reschedule the test for a later date; (2) Inform the homeowner that closed-house conditions were not maintained, close all windows and doors, and begin testing at least 12 hours after closed-house conditions have been met; (3) Perform a four- to ninety-day test maintaining closed-house conditions while the test is in progress; (4) Perform a long-term test, greater than 90 days, under normal living conditions. This guidance pertains not only to charcoal canisters but to all radon test devices.

For further information:

Call the New Jersey Radon Hotline

1-800-648-0394

or write to:

NJDEP Radon Section

Mail Code 25-01

P O Box 420

Trenton, NJ 08625-0420

or visit

<http://www.NJradon.org>