

**Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department
Offers FREE Radon Test Kits throughout January**

Benzie County / Leelanau County - January 5, 2018 - January is National Radon Action Month – an opportune time for residents to test for radon in their homes, a health risk to millions of households.

Because families are spending more time indoors during the winter months, January is a good time to test for this radioactive, invisible, odorless gas. Exposure to radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States. The EPA estimates that approximately 21,000 lung cancer deaths each year are radon-related.

Radon comes from the natural (radioactive) breakdown of uranium in soil, rock, and water and gets into the air you breathe. Radon enters buildings through openings in the foundation floor or walls (sump openings, crawlspaces, floor/wall joints, cracks, etc.). Radon can become trapped in buildings and lead to elevated and harmful radon levels.

One in eight Michigan homes is likely to have an elevated radon level. Radon is tasteless, odorless, and colorless, and it has no warning symptoms (it does not cause headaches, nausea, fatigue, etc.). Testing is the only way to know if you and your family are at risk for health issues caused by radon.

The Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department (BLDHD) is offering free radon test kits throughout January. Test kits are available at the Health Department's Environmental Health office, located at the Benzie Community Resource Center in Benzonia or the Connie Binsfield Center in Lake Leelanau. Radon test kits are also available for purchase at local hardware stores and home improvement centers.

According to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, 10% of samples in Benzie County and 6% in Leelanau County have results exceeding 4pCi/L Radon Levels. Tom Fountain, the Environmental Health Director with the Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department, says "those properties which exceed 4pCi/L should conduct long term testing to determine if Radon abatement should be performed, and although not a huge issue in our region, each household should be sampled just to be sure."

Radon problems can be fixed by qualified contractors for a cost like that of many common home repairs, such as painting or having a new water heater installed (anywhere from \$500 to about \$2,500).

For more information on radon and the test kits, contact the Environmental Health office at (231) 882-2103, or search for "Michigan Indoor Radon Program" at www.michigan.gov/deq.

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