



NDMA 2023 Policy Forum

October 6, 2023

Policy No. 4

Submitted By: Stephanie Dahl, MD

Subject: Radon Awareness

Summary:

Radon is an odorless, invisible gas, and the second leading cause of lung cancer. The only way to know if an elevated level of radon is present in a home is to test for it. Since North Dakota is among the highest-risk states for radon exposure, it is imperative that we provide testing disclosures and warnings of the dangers of radon to prospective property buyers and tenants.

Relevant Information:

- Radon gas is a form of ionizing radiation that results from the natural decay of radioactive elements present in rocks and soils. For most individuals, exposure to radon at home is their largest source of exposure to ionizing radiation. Radon ranks second to cigarette smoking as a cause of lung cancer and causes more than 21,000 lung cancer deaths per year in the United States. <https://www.jabfm.org/content/34/3/602>
- North Dakota has one of the highest levels of residential radon in the United States. For example, the average radon level in homes in Grand Forks, is 11.7 pCi/L.2 That value is 10 times the average radon level in US homes (1.3 pCi/L) and 3 times the level (4 pCi/L) for which the Environmental Protection Agency recommends remediation of homes.
- The root cause of deaths caused by radon is the failure to test and remediate homes for radon, a result of the public's poor understanding of this hazard. Most US respondents do not know that radon causes lung cancer; indeed, most individuals younger than 30 do not even know what radon is.

Proposed Action:

NDMA should work with other health care leaders in North Dakota, including the ND Department of Health and Human Services to raise radon awareness in the community, through its communications and advocacy. Further, NDMA should work with other stakeholders to submit a bill for the 2025 session requiring residential property sellers and landlords to disclose knowledge of radon testing and mitigation in their properties and provide information to buyers and tenants about the dangers of radon and importance of testing:

Responsibilities for rental properties:

- Landlords must regularly check for radon levels in rental properties by a licensed radon professional
- Radon test results must be disclosed to current and future tenants.
- In the case of elevated radon levels, landlords must use a licensed radon professional to mitigate radon levels to safe levels.

Responsibilities for property sellers:

- Seller must disclose radon testing results conducted by a licensed radon professional.

Adopted November 28, 2023

Erica Hofland, MD

Policy Forum Chair