



## News from the Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders

Public Information Contacts: Linda Van Zandt / Joanne Vuoso / Lisa Krueger  
908.231.7020 publicinfo@co.somerset.nj.us

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### County Offering Reduced-Cost Radon Testing Kits

*Radon exposure is estimated to cause 21,000 lung cancer deaths annually*

**SOMERVILLE** – The Somerset County Board of Freeholders, along with the Somerset County Health Department, and in conjunction with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), is recognizing January as Radon Action Month in Somerset County.



Freeholder Director Robert Zaborowski presents Environmental Health Coordinator Dawn Prandi a proclamation proclaiming January as Radon Action Month in Somerset County.

“As a result of the positive feedback we received in our 2007 outreach program and a demonstrated need for increased testing in Somerset County, the county Department of Health is providing radon testing kits to residents at a reduced cost again in 2008. The kits will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis for **\$10** beginning in **January**,” said Freeholder Peter S. Palmer, health department liaison.

The Health Department is located in the county Administration Building at 20 Grove St. Residents are encouraged to call 908-231-7155 beforehand to ensure availability of kits. Kits may be picked up weekdays between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. Free parking is available in the Bernie Field parking deck on East High Street.

“Radon is a serious health risk. It is the leading cause of lung cancer in nonsmokers and the second leading cause of lung cancer in general. For smokers, the risk of developing lung cancer is increased dramatically if they also are exposed to excess radon. According to the Somerset County Cancer Coalition (SCCC), lung and bronchus cancers are the number one cause of cancer-related fatalities in Somerset County,” he said.

Radon does not cause any immediate symptoms, such as asthma or respiratory problems. The risk of developing lung cancer is the only known health effect.

Radon is an odorless, tasteless and invisible gas that occurs naturally in soil. It is produced by the natural breakdown of uranium and radium in rock formations, and occurs in higher concentrations in certain areas of the state, including Somerset County.

**Robert Zaborowski, Freeholder Director \* Denise Coyle, Freeholder Deputy Director**  
**Peter S. Palmer, Freeholder \* Rick Fontana, Freeholder \* Jack M. Ciattarelli, Freeholder**  
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NJDEP data indicate that up to 54 percent of homes in certain municipalities within the county have levels exceeding the radon action level of 4 picocuries per liter. According to Health Department data, one out of every three county homes tested during 2007 exceeded the radon action level.

“In an effort to reduce the risk of exposure to radon gas, the Health Department encourages residents to have their homes tested, said Freeholder Palmer. “It’s not uncommon to find that homes on the same block will have different test results. So even if your neighbor’s home is not affected by radon gas, it does not mean that your home is in an acceptable range.”

Also, an information display will be in the lobby of the Administration Building from **Jan. 2 to 16**, with literature on radon testing, interpreting results, resources for mitigation of high levels of radon and health information on lung cancer.

Additionally, the SCCC will sponsor an educational workshop on **Wednesday, Jan. 16**, at the Somerset Medical Center Steeple Chase Cancer Center. The “Breathe Easy” seminar will run from 7 to 8:30 p.m. with Dr. Hen-Vai Wu discussing the relationship between lung cancer, environmental agents and second-hand smoke. Dr. Wu is board certified in internal medicine, hematology and oncology. Attendees can receive a free radon testing kit, courtesy of the cancer coalition. To register, call 908-203-6234.

The SCCC is a program of the county health department and is made possible by a grant from the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services’ Office of Cancer Control and Prevention. The coalition encourages all residents to test for radon and to provide a smoke-free environment for their families. The coalition provides smoking cessation assistance to all county residents.

To join the cancer coalition, or learn about available cancer-screening locations, dates, times and eligibility, contact SCCC Coordinator Lucille Young-Talbot at 908-203-6077 or visit [www.co.somerset.nj.us/health](http://www.co.somerset.nj.us/health).

For more information on obtaining kits or about radon, call 908-231-7155 or e-mail [healthdiv@co.somerset.nj.us](mailto:healthdiv@co.somerset.nj.us).