



News from the Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders

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Reduced-Cost Radon Testing Kits Available

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.

“As a result of the positive feedback we received in our 2008 outreach program and a demonstrated need for increased testing, the Somerset County Health Department is providing radon testing kits to residents at a reduced cost again in 2009. One kit per household will be distributed to residents on a first-come, first-served basis for **\$6**, beginning in **January**,” said Freeholder Patricia Walsh, health department liaison.

Radon kits may be picked up from the county Health Department, located at 27 Warren St., weekdays between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. Residents are encouraged to call 908-231-7155 beforehand to ensure availability of kits. Free parking is available.

In addition, residents may contact their local health department for information on obtaining radon kits. Pricing and residency requirements may vary among towns. A listing of health departments is available on the county Health Department Web site at www.co.somerset.nj.us/health/links.htm.

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, lung and bronchus cancers are the No. 1 cause of cancer-related fatalities in Somerset County.

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.

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 of three homes in Somerset County tested during 2008 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 Walsh. “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.”

For more information on obtaining a kit or about radon, call 908-231-7155 or e-mail healthdiv@co.somerset.nj.us.