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Radon - An Underground Danger

By: Lareina Taing

Striking an underground pipeline or cable can result in an array of consequences, but did you know that there are non-excavation related underground dangers? One prime example is an odorless, colorless gas named “radon”. “Radon...forms naturally from the decay (breaking down) of radioactive elements, such as uranium, which are found in different amounts in soil and rock throughout the world. Radon gas in the soil and rock can move into the air, underground water, and surface water. Radon is present outdoors and indoors. It is normally found at very low levels in outdoor air and in drinking water from rivers and lakes. It can be found at higher levels in the air in houses and other buildings, as well as in water from underground sources, such as well water.”¹

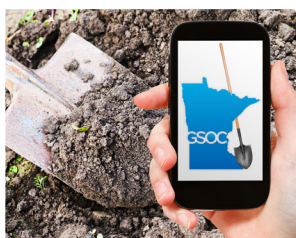


Is radon harmful to you? According to the American Cancer Society, prolonged exposure to radon can lead to the development of lung cancer. Radon gas in the air breaks down into small radioactive elements that can be trapped in the lining of the lungs, where it continuously gives off radiation, which can result in cancer. Although cigarette smoking is the most common cause of lung cancer in the U.S., radon exposure is the second leading cause. If you are a smoker and have had prolonged exposure to radon, your chance of developing lung cancer significantly increases.

How can you check your radon levels in your home and yard? DIY radon detection kits can be ordered through the mail or purchased in hardware or home supply stores. The kits are placed in the home for a period of time and then mailed to a lab for analysis. Short-term and long-term kits are available, with increased accuracy depending on the length of the test. You can also hire a professional to test radon levels in your home. Qualified contractors can be found through state radon offices, which are listed on the EPA [website](#).

Gopher State One Call (GSOC) consistently strives to promote the message of safety to all Minnesotans. In addition to contacting GSOC 48 hours in advance, excluding weekends and holidays, before starting any excavation project, take other precautions to ensure the integrity of the ground, such as checking for radon. Be aware of all hidden underground dangers, large or small!

Source¹: American Cancer Society. [Click here for more information.](#)



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