

York PA Radon Testing Gains Urgency as Health Officials Warn of Rising Lung Cancer Risks

New data from environmental health monitors has placed York PA radon testing at the center of a growing public health conversation across south-central Pennsylvania. The colorless, odorless radioactive gas, which seeps into buildings from the ground, has been detected at elevated levels in a significant number of residences and commercial properties in the region, prompting renewed calls for widespread screening. Health authorities now emphasize that routine measurement of indoor radon concentrations is the only reliable way to determine whether a building poses a long-term threat to its occupants.

Radon: The Invisible Threat Beneath Homes

Radon forms naturally when uranium in soil and rock decays. It moves upward through the ground and enters buildings through cracks in foundations, gaps around pipes, and other openings. Once trapped indoors, the gas can accumulate to dangerous levels. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has long identified radon as the second leading cause of lung cancer after smoking, responsible for an estimated 21,000 deaths each year nationwide. Pennsylvania ranks among the states with the highest average indoor radon concentrations, and York County has historically shown elevated readings in both residential and municipal testing programs.

Despite the known risks, many homeowners and renters in the area have never conducted a radon measurement. Real estate transactions in Pennsylvania require a disclosure of known radon levels, but the requirement does not compel a test. This gap means that a large portion of the housing stock remains unmonitored. The recent push for [York PA radon testing](#) aims to close that gap by encouraging routine checks regardless of whether a property is being sold.

Why York County Deserves Special Attention

York County sits atop geological formations that are prone to producing radon. The underlying bedrock, much of it composed of carbonate and metamorphic rock, has been linked to higher radon potential in surveys conducted by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. In several municipalities within the county, short-term test results have exceeded the EPA action level of 4 picocuries per liter of air. Long-term exposure at or above that threshold carries a measurable increase in lung cancer risk.

The geography is not the only factor. Older homes, which make up a substantial share of the county's housing stock, often lack modern vapor barriers or sealed foundations that can help block radon entry. Heating and cooling patterns also play a role: during colder months, homes

are sealed tight, and the pressure difference between the indoors and outdoors can draw more radon inside. This seasonal variation means that a single test taken in summer may underestimate the true annual average concentration. For that reason, health experts recommend either a long-term test lasting at least 90 days or a series of short-term tests conducted in different seasons.

How Testing Works and What the Results Mean

Radon testing is straightforward and inexpensive. Homeowners can purchase do-it-yourself test kits at hardware stores, through county health departments, or from online retailers. The kits typically contain a small charcoal or alpha-track detector that is placed in the lowest livable level of the home for a specified period. After the exposure window, the device is mailed to a laboratory for analysis. Results arrive within a few weeks and show the average concentration in picocuries per liter.

If the result is at or above 4 pCi/L, the EPA recommends installing a mitigation system, usually a sub-slab depressurization system that vents the gas safely outside. Mitigation can reduce radon levels by up to 99 percent and is often more affordable than homeowners expect, typically costing between \$800 and \$2,500 depending on the house design. Even for readings between 2 and 4 pCi/L, the EPA suggests considering mitigation, as no level of radon exposure is entirely safe.

Local environmental groups and county extension offices have been distributing free or low-cost test kits as part of a broader awareness campaign. The goal is to make York PA radon testing a routine household task, akin to changing smoke detector batteries or testing well water. The campaign also includes informational sessions for real estate agents and home inspectors, who are often the first professionals to encounter homes with unknown radon levels.

Legislative and Policy Context

Pennsylvania's Radon Certification Act requires all radon testing and mitigation professionals to be certified by the state, but it does not mandate testing for homeowners. Several bills introduced in recent legislative sessions have proposed requiring radon tests at the point of sale for all residential properties, with disclosure of results to buyers. None has passed into law. As a result, the responsibility falls largely on individual property owners and tenants.

The lack of a statewide mandate has spurred action at the municipal level. Some townships and boroughs in York County have begun including radon awareness materials in their building permit packets. Others have partnered with the Pennsylvania Department of Health to offer subsidized test kits to low-income households. These local efforts, while valuable, vary widely

in scope and funding. A coordinated countywide initiative remains absent, leaving gaps in coverage that public health advocates say need to be addressed.

At the federal level, the EPA continues to update its radon risk maps and provide technical guidance, but it does not regulate indoor radon concentrations directly. The agency's Indoor Air Quality program offers resources for states and localities, but implementation is left to state governments. This patchwork of policies means that the urgency of York PA radon testing is communicated mainly through public health campaigns, media coverage, and the efforts of nonprofit organizations rather than through a single cohesive regulatory framework.

What Residents Can Do Now

For anyone living in York County, the first step is to obtain a test kit. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection operates a radon hotline that provides information on certified laboratories and low-cost kits. Local libraries and county government offices sometimes carry free kits during awareness months, typically January and February, when heating season makes conditions most representative. Residents who rent should ask their landlords whether a test has been performed; if not, they can request one or conduct a test themselves in their own living space.

After testing, the next action depends on the result. If levels are below 2 pCi/L, no immediate action is needed, but retesting every couple of years is recommended. Between 2 and 4 pCi/L, mitigation should be considered. Above 4 pCi/L, a certified mitigator should be contacted promptly. The Pennsylvania Radon Certification Program maintains a searchable list of qualified professionals by county.

Beyond individual action, community organizations are pushing for broader data collection. Some have proposed a countywide radon mapping project that would aggregate anonymized test results to identify hotspots and guide future mitigation funding. Such a map would also help homebuyers make informed decisions and could strengthen the case for a mandatory testing law. Until that data exists, the best defense against radon remains consistent, widespread testing.

Long-Term Outlook

The conversation around radon in York County is unlikely to fade. As awareness of indoor air quality grows, and as medical research continues to link low-level radiation exposure to lung cancer, the pressure for action will increase. Real estate professionals, health officials, and homeowners alike are beginning to treat radon testing not as an optional add-on but as a standard component of home maintenance. The shift mirrors earlier changes in public

attitudes toward lead paint, asbestos, and carbon monoxide detectors, where voluntary adoption eventually gave way to widespread expectation and, in many cases, regulation.

For now, the emphasis remains on education and access. Making York PA radon testing affordable and convenient is the primary goal of the current public health campaign. The hope is that as more residents test their homes, the resulting data will build a clearer picture of the problem and drive the systemic changes needed to address it. In the meantime, every test performed is a step toward reducing cancer risk for a family, a neighborhood, and ultimately the entire county.