

# Radon Advice

This information guide is provided for clients whose properties are believed to fall within an area known to be affected by Radon Gas as a result of findings on our Environmental Searches.

## What is Radon?

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that is believed to be the greatest source of radioactivity that most people ever come into contact with. It occurs where uranium is found in the rock strata beneath the surface of the earth all over the world and affects everyone to some extent.

## Where in the UK does Radon exist?

All of the UK's land will record some evidence of Radon Gas. Certain parts of the country are known from research to encounter higher levels of radon gas. The areas with the greatest known radon emissions include, but are not limited to, Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, and parts of Oxfordshire, Derbyshire and Northamptonshire.

## What are the dangers from Radon?

Radon is a source of radioactivity, which in turn is known to increase the risk of certain types of cancer, notably lung cancer. However the risk of cancer may be compounded or reduced by a number of factors including preventative measures, lifestyle, diet and pollution so it is very difficult to determine the risk of radon to an individual in isolation to other factors.

## When is the level of Radon considered to be a cause for concern?

Radon is measured in becquerels per cubic metre (Bqm3). The average UK household radon measurement is believed to be 20 Bqm3. Action is recommended when the level of Radon exceeds the government's determined action level of 200Bqm3. Some areas, such as those highlighted above are described as Radon Affected Areas and this where 1% or more of the number of households in the area exceed the action level. However the reports that we obtain only reflect averages in an area and are not specific to a particular property.

## How can the actual level of Radon in a property be discovered?

Radon levels in a property can be determined by placing a number of detectors in a property and then monitoring radon levels over a three month period. The detectors then need to be sent off for analysis, although the results of that analysis take several months to be compiled. There is no quick answer to finding out a particular property's risk. We are aware that the results of the test can vary considerably based upon the time of year that the test is undertaken and the ventilation in the room affected. Radon levels are known to be capable of reduction by ventilation and tend to be less when weather conditions are warmer.

## Can Radon Levels be Reduced?

Yes. In most new homes constructed after 1988 in Radon Affected areas the builders will have fitted additional sub floor ventilation to reduce the levels entering a property. This now forms part of Building Regulations and NHBC. For properties built prior to that date or without suitable sub floor ventilation, remedial works can still be undertaken to reduce the level but inevitably at a financial cost to the owner.

## Has a test been done on the existing property?

We will ask the Vendor's conveyancer if the property has been tested for Radon. However from our experience it is rare that current owner(s) or predecessor(s) have previously commissioned a test.

## Is there anywhere I can obtain more advice on the subject?

Please contact the Health Protection Agency for an advice pack on 0800 614529 or visit their web site at [www.hpa.org.uk/radiation/radon/index.htm](http://www.hpa.org.uk/radiation/radon/index.htm).

Please note that the information set out in this helpsheet is a summary of some of the key facts contained on the Health Protection Agency's web site known at the time of production, Summer 2005. Shoosmiths are not expert in this field and nothing within the information sheet should be interpreted as advice from Shoosmiths on Radon. Clients must make their own enquiries and take advice from specific environmental experts including the relevant local authority within which their property is situated for appropriate advice.



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