

Livingston County Health Department Environmental Health Newsletter

Winter 2019

Radon in Livingston County

Radon is the number one cause of lung cancer among non-smokers, according to EPA estimates. Overall, radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer. It causes about 21,100 lung cancer deaths every year.

What is radon? Radon is an element that occurs naturally in soil and rock. It is a tasteless, odorless, colorless, radioactive gas. This gas can become harmful if concentrations build-up within homes.

Radon can enter homes through sump openings, crawlspaces, floor/wall joints, cracks, etc. One in eight Michigan homes is likely to have an elevated radon level. According to a study conducted by the MDEQ, radon is present in elevated levels in about 40% of Livingston County homes. Long-term exposure to elevated levels can increase your risk of lung cancer. Radon has no warning symptoms. Testing is the only way to know if you and your family are at risk for health issues caused by radon.

Testing homes for radon is easy. Short-term radon test kits can be purchased for \$5.00 from the Livingston County Health Department. Radon test kits are also available at local hardware stores and home improvement centers. Radon problems can be fixed by qualified contractors for a cost similar to that of many common home repairs, such as painting or having a new water heater installed (anywhere from \$500 to about \$2,500).

Have questions about radon? Give the Livingston County Health Department's Environmental Health Division a call: (517) 546-9858. You can also find more information on our website: www.livgov.com/health/eh/Pages/radon.aspx

Source: United States Environmental Protection Agency. (2018). Health Risk of Radon. Retrieved from: <https://www.epa.gov/radon/health-risk-radon>

Free Radon Test Kits!
January is "Radon Awareness Month." To promote radon testing, LCHD is giving away FREE short-term radon test kits during the month of January. LCHD is also providing local cities, villages, and townships with a limited number of short-term radon test kits to hand out to the public. Please stop by our office or your local municipality to get your radon kit!

Estimated Radon Levels in Livingston County as of March 30, 2018

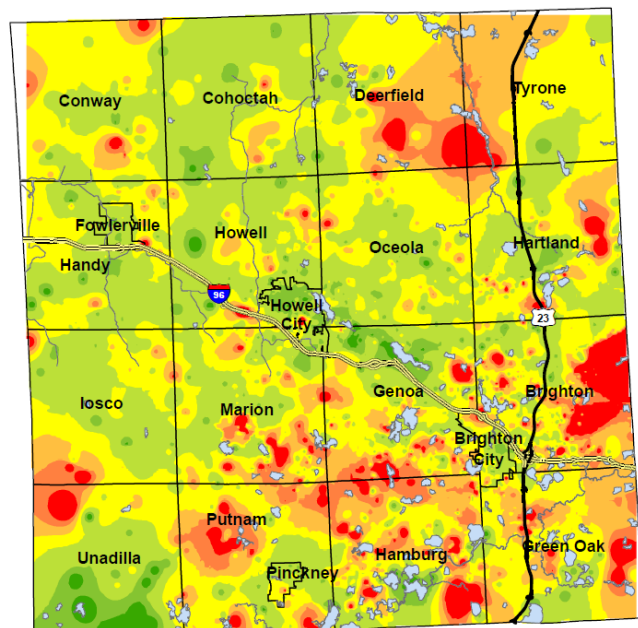
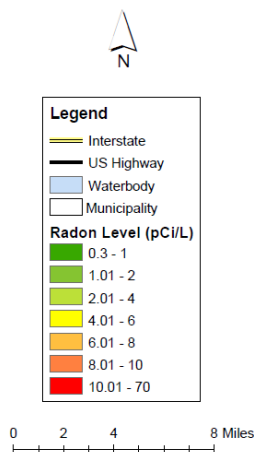
Data and map from:

Environmental Health Division
Livingston County Health Department
(517) 546-9858

Disclaimer:

These results only represent homes tested with Livingston County Health Department radon test kits. Therefore, this map is not an actual representation of radon levels for all homes in the Livingston County. Green areas do not ensure safe radon levels.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends a radon mitigation system be installed in homes with radon levels > 4 pCi/L. For more information visit: www.epa.gov/radon



Think before you ink...

Tattooing and piercing break the skin, causing open wounds and in some cases bleeding. This practice can leave you susceptible to infections. That is why it is so important to choose a safe, and reputable studio for your next tattoo/piercing. Here are some key things to look for when choosing a studio:

- The facility should be currently licensed by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, and inspected and approved for operation by the Livingston County Health Department.
- The staff and studio area should be very clean.
- The studio should have separate areas for piercing and tattooing.
- The studio should have and use an autoclave (equipment used to sterilize the necessary equipment).
- Needles and other "sharps" should only be used once and should be opened (from individual packages) in front of you before the procedure.
- Staff should wear new latex gloves during each procedure.
- Piercing guns should not be used as the "gun" cannot be properly sterilized in an autoclave.
- Inks used in tattooing should be placed in a single-use cup and then disposed. Ink should never be taken directly from the main source bottle or returned to that bottle.

LCHD annually inspects facilities in Livingston County that perform tattooing (including permanent cosmetics or microblading), body piercing (except for just piercing the ear), or branding. A complete list of currently licensed body art facilities can be found on our website at:

www.livgov.com/health/eh/Pages/body-art.aspx

Be an informed consumer!
Always have your work performed by a trained professional at a licensed facility.



Source: University of Michigan. (2018). Body Art: What You Need to Know before Getting a Tattoo or Piercing. Retrieved from: <https://www.uhs.umich.edu/bodyart>

Prevent Mercury Exposures

Mercury is a metal which has several forms. Metallic mercury is a shiny, silver-white, odorless liquid. Once heated, it becomes a colorless, odorless gas. Mercury is found in some thermometers, thermostats, barometers, antique clock pendulums, and fluorescent light bulbs. When these items are broken, mercury can spill out. If the mercury is not cleaned up the right way, it will give off an invisible vapor that is bad for your health. This vapor stays around for a long time and is bad for anyone to be around, but it's especially bad for young children and unborn babies.

How can you protect yourself from potential mercury exposures?

- Carefully handle and dispose of products that contain mercury.
- If you have mercury containing devices, call the Livingston County Department of Public Works to arrange for safe disposal (517-546-9609).
- If mercury spills, contact the Livingston County Health Department. If it is after hours, call Poison Control (1-800-222-1222) or 911.
- Do not vacuum up spilled mercury, because it will vaporize and increase exposure.
- Keep pregnant women and children away from rooms where liquid mercury is used.
- For concerns about ingesting methylmercury by eating fish, refer to the Michigan Eat Safe Fish website: michigan.gov/eatsafefish



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