

Free kits available to test for radon

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LAS VEGAS — January is National Radon Action Month and the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension (UNCE) is offering Nevada residents free radon test kits from Dec. 1 through Feb. 28.

Test kits are available from the radon education program UNCE office, 8050 Paradise Road, Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., according to Marilyn Ming, UNCE marketing/public relations specialist.

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that can accumulate in buildings including homes. It can cause lung cancer.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates 21,000 Americans die each year from radon-caused lung cancer, Ming said. It kills more people than secondhand smoke, drunk driving, falls in the home, drowning or fires in the home.

Although radon problems can be in any building, most people receive the largest part of their exposure to radon at home. In fact, about a quarter of Nevada homes tested had radon concentrations at or above the EPA Action Level of 4 picoCuries per liter of air (pCi/l). A picoCurie per liter of air is measurement of radioactivity per one liter of air.

Living in a home with an average radon level of 4 pCi/l poses a similar risk of developing lung cancer to smoking half a pack of cigarettes a day, Ming said. If radon problems are found, they can be fixed.

Radon can enter any home — old or new, well-sealed or drafty, Ming said. Homes with slab on grade, crawlspace or basement foundations have an equal chance for radon problems since radon can enter any building that contacts the ground. The only way to know a building's radon level is to test it. If high levels of radon are found, there is a way to reduce or mitigate radon levels.

Radon-caused lung cancer is highly preventable. A simple three-day test can determine if a house has a radon problem and winter is an ideal time to test a home for radon, Ming explained. When a home is closed up during cool-