

County reminds people to test for radon

MARIANNE KOBAK MCKOWN
mkobak@elkodaily.com
ELKO - University of Nevada Cooperative Extension is trying to make sure everyone is aware of the risks of radon in the state.

This radioactive gas is colorless and odorless and naturally occurs in homes. The Elko County commissioners recently designated January as National Radon Action Month.

"Since 1989, about 383 homes have been tested for radon, which is only about 2 percent of our population in the county, so we have a lot more work to do to get the word out as to the importance of testing for radon," said Jill Tingey, UNR Cooperative Extension educator.

About 39 percent of those homes had radon concentrations over the threshold. Elko County has the fifth highest radon potential in the state. The highest area is Spring Creek. Wells and Elko also have a high potential for radon.

According to the EPA, 21,000 Americans die of radon-caused lung cancer each year. It is the leading cause of lung cancer among nonsmokers.

"It equates to smoking half a pack of cigarettes a day if you have radon in your home," Tingey said.

People who want to test their home for radon can purchase a test for about \$7. However, this month and next the UNR Cooperative Extension is giving away tests, Tingey said. The Elko office is open from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday at 701 Walnut St.

The test takes about three days and it must be done on the lowest level of the house that people live in, Tingey said.

The EPA recommends every home be tested because the gas can enter any building, old or new and two neighboring house can have different radon levels.

Radon is produced from the decay of uranium in rocks and soil, according to UNR Cooperative Extension.

Before approving the proclamation, Commissioner Glen Guttry asked Tingey who discovered radon. The gas was discovered in 1900 by Friedrich Ernst Dorn, according to the Royal Society of Chemistry.

Once radon is found in a home, there are mitigation steps residents can take to get rid of the gas. The state also has a few certified contractors who can mitigate homes, but none are located in Elko County. To find certified radon mitigators go to www.RadonNV.com.