

# OUR NEVADA

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## MASTER GARDENER

# Debunking household radon myths

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special to the RGJ

“Only homes with basements have radon problems,” “Since granite emits radon, I must replace my granite countertops” or



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“My home is new, so it won’t have a radon problem.” These are just a few of the many radon misconceptions people have.

If you’ve ever heard of these myths or wondered about them, continue reading to learn more about radon as these radon misconceptions are debunked.

Radon is a radioactive, colorless, odorless and tasteless gas that comes from the ground. It accumulates in homes and can cause lung cancer. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates 21,000 Americans die each

year from radon-caused lung cancer, killing more people than secondhand smoke, drunk driving, falls in the home, drowning or house fires. In Nevada, one in four homes already tested have shown radon concentrations at or above the EPA action level. According to experts, living in a home with radon concentrations at the action level poses as much risk of developing lung cancer as smoking half a pack of cigarettes a day.

However, a home with a radon problem is fixable.

» **Myth 1: Only homes with basements have radon problems.**

Any home, whether new, old, well-sealed, drafty, with a basement, with a crawl space or with a concrete slab foundation is at risk. Only four types of homes do not have the potential for radon problems: a mobile home without skirting, a house on stilts, a house boat

or a treehouse.

» **Myth 2: My home won’t have a radon problem because my neighbor tested and found low levels.**

Neighboring homes can have two completely different radon levels as radon is subject to numerous variables affecting concentrations. Every home should be tested, and the only way to know is to test.

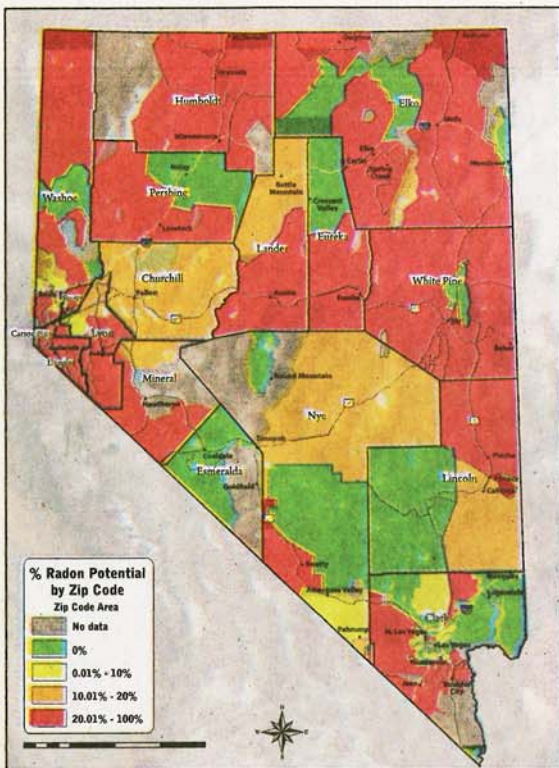
» **Myth 3: On the map, my home isn’t located in the red zone, so I won’t have a problem.**

One in four tested Nevada homes found elevated radon levels. However, not every home in Nevada has been tested for radon, and there are homes within the low radon potential areas (the “orange or yellow” zones) that have elevated radon levels.

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### Nevada Statewide Radon Potential by Zip Code



\*These results are based on independently tested homes from 1980 to Sept. 30, 2013. Last updated: November 20, 2014. © 2014 University of Nevada Cooperative Extension. All rights reserved. The University of Nevada Cooperative Extension is an equal opportunity institution. The University of Nevada Cooperative Extension is an equal opportunity institution. The University of Nevada Cooperative Extension is an equal opportunity institution.

## Myths

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» **Myth 4: I should test my crawl space for radon since it is the lowest area of my home.**

Residents must test the lowest lived-in area of the home. It’s important to test frequently occupied rooms because the test kit must sample the air that residents breathe. These rooms include the living room, family room or bedroom. Do not test your crawl space as individuals don’t occupy those areas.

» **Myth 5: Since granite emits radon, I must replace my granite countertops.**

Granite countertops could contribute a very small percentage of radon found in a home. The radon from granite countertops is diluted inches from the surface and people usually don’t spend much time close to

their granite countertops. Residents should be more concerned with the radon emitted from the soil. In fact, 95 percent of the radon concentration in a home originates from the uranium found in the soil under or near the home. Long story short, keep your granite countertops.

» **Myth 6: My home has a radon problem. We need to move to a different home.**

Any home with a radon problem is fixable and a mitigation system will lower radon concentrations. Homeowners can install systems themselves using “Protecting Your Home From Radon,” a do-it-yourself manual available in local libraries or for purchase at Cooperative Extension offices, or they can hire a certified radon mitigator.

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