

# THE INSIDE SCOOP

## Education key in battle against radioactive gas

by Kurt Hildebrand

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If radon glowed in the dark, or stank or appeared as a haze, someone would know something was wrong.

But the radioactive gas that's the leading cause of lung cancer among nonsmokers doesn't do any of those things.

It's odorless, colorless and tasteless, and Douglas County is home to the most tests over the EPA action level in Nevada.

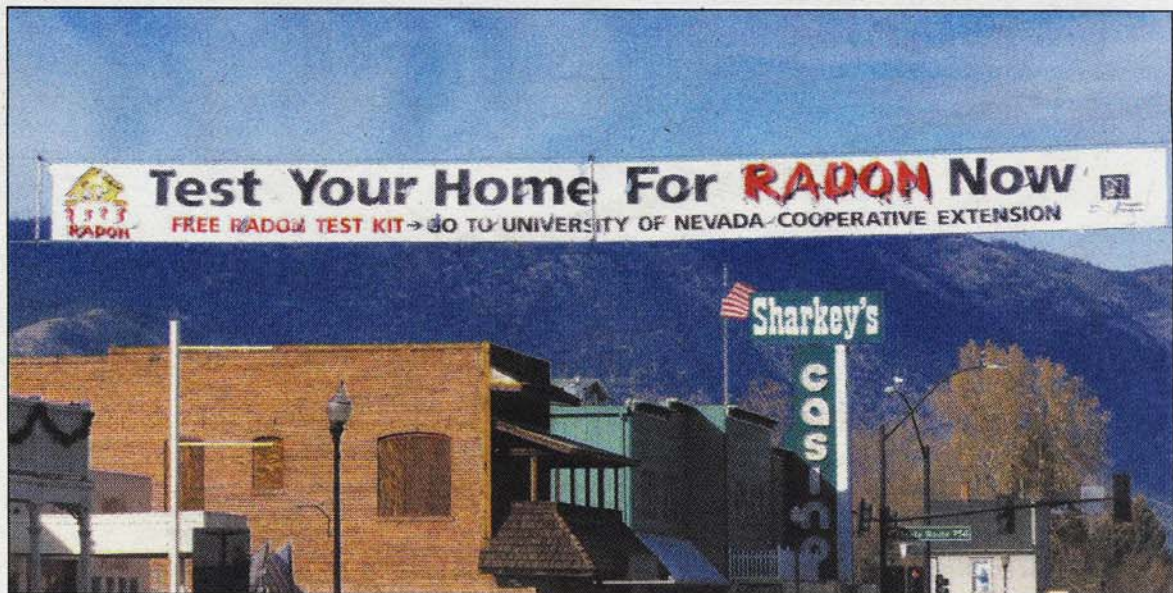
The University of Nevada Cooperative Extension is hosting two meetings about radon during January, where residents can find out about the gas and find out how to correct it if they have too much.

As of Sept. 30, 2011, 2,409 homes in Douglas County have been tested for radon, or about 10 percent. That's the highest percentage of homes tested for radon in any county in the state.

Douglas also has the distinction of having the highest number of homes with tests above the limit, though not the highest percentage of homes with elevated radon levels.

Cooperative Extension Educator Steve Lewis attributes the high numbers to improved radon education in the Valley.

"It's the banner," Lewis said referring to the banner hanging



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A banner urging Carson Valley residents to test their homes for radon is stretched across Highway 395 in Gardnerville.

across Highway 395 in downtown Gardnerville. It's also the annual educational sessions the extension hosts in Douglas County.

Radon is created naturally in the soil when radioactive elements in granite decay. It seeps into homes through cracks in the foundation and tends to accumulate in still places where there isn't a lot of ventilation.

That explains why homes at Lake Tahoe and the foothill region of Carson Valley tend to have higher percentages of homes above the federal action level of four picocuries per liter

of air.

In Stateline, 67 percent of the 183 homes tested were above the limit for radon. In Zephyr Cove, 59 percent of the 202 homes tested were positive.

The most tested ZIP code in the Valley also turned out to have the highest percentage of homes with tests above the limit.

Of the 677 Gardnerville residents in the 89460 ZIP code who tested their homes, 325 came back for radon, or slightly less than half.

Radon presentations will be Thursday in the TRPA Confer-

ence Room, 128 Market St., in Stateline and Jan. 19 in the CVIC Hall in Minden. Both meetings are 6:30 p.m.

Free test kits and information on how to mitigate increased radon will be available at the meeting. Of the four contractors certified to mitigate radon in Nevada, two, Derrick Carpenter and Norman Denny, are based in Carson Valley.

Commissioners declared January Radon month in Douglas County on Thursday.

For more information, call 782-9960 or visit [www.radon-nv.com](http://www.radon-nv.com).