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## *DHEC offering free radon test kits*

THE JOURNAL STAFF

COLUMBIA — South Carolina residents can get free radon test kits this month, thanks to the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC).

Radon is a naturally occurring, invisible, odorless, tasteless gas, the agency said in a news release Thursday. The gas is dispersed in outdoor air, but can reach harmful levels when it gets trapped inside a building. Radon problems can be fixed, but can only be detected by performing a home test.

"Elevated levels of radon have been found in homes in almost every county of South Carolina. Two homes right next to each other can have different radon levels," said Rhonda Thompson, chief of DHEC's Bureau of Air Quality. "The only way to know if a home has high radon levels is to test."

January is National Radon Action Month, so

DHEC is encouraging people to test and to become familiar with the risks of radon when it's present inside a home.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates radon causes more than 20,000 lung cancer deaths per year nationally. It is the second-leading cause of lung cancer in the country after smoking, and the health risks from radon are greater for smokers, DHEC said.

South Carolina has nationally certified radon contractors who can measure radon and install solutions to reduce elevated radon levels, according to the release. A list of credentialed radon professionals is posted online at [scdhec.gov/radon](http://scdhec.gov/radon). Residents can request one free radon test kit per home from the same site.

Test kits can also be purchased from the National Radon Program for \$17. Call the program at 1-800-767-7236 for more information or to buy a kit.