

Radon

Depending on Assistance Needed, Call:	
DGS Environmental Health and Safety	202-576-8962
LEA Contact	
Other	

Situation Description

Radon is a naturally occurring, tasteless, odorless, colorless radioactive gas that develops from the decay of uranium. Since uranium occurs naturally in small quantities in most rocks and soil, radon gas is continually released into soil, underground water and outdoor air. Radon gas can seep into buildings through openings such as cracks, building joints, and utility penetrations. The EPA has developed a radon zone map that indicates potential radon levels. District of Columbia is a Zone 3 which is low potential for radon exposure. However, EPA recommends that all building be tested for possible radon regardless of the geographic location or zone designation. The presence of radon gas depends on a variety of factors such as building construction and negative air pressure. The only way to find out if unhealthy levels of radon are present is to test for it.

Health Effects of Radon

Radon is a proven carcinogen and is the second leading cause of lung cancer after smoking. The risk of getting lung cancer from radon depends on the level of radon gas, and length of exposure.

Measures to Test and Remediate Exposure

As outlined in the Healthy Schools Act of 2010, and EPA Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools the DGS Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) will monitor and respond to any concerns about radon gas exposure. If warranted the EHS will recommend and supervise radon gas testing following EPA Radon Testing Protocols. EHS will contract with a certified lab for sample analysis when needed.

New building and modernization projects will include current construction standards and techniques for the reduction of possible radon gas levels as required by the Healthy Schools Act of 2010 and LEED for Schools certification. Modernization projects will include radon gas testing upon building completion. Radon testing will be approved and monitored by DGS Environmental Health and Safety.