



News Release

Wednesday, November 19, 2014

Take the test and see if your home is a radon risk

Eighteen thousand households across Gloucestershire are being offered the chance to test their house for levels of radioactive gas radon.

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas which we're all exposed to all the time. It cannot be seen, heard, smelled or tasted - but each year is believed to lead to over 1,000 lung cancer deaths.

Now Public Health England (PHE) is targeting thousands of homes in areas covered by Cotswold District Council, the Forest of Dean District Council and Cheltenham Borough Council, where scientists estimate there is a higher than usual chance that homes will have high radon levels.

"It has long been known that the Cotswolds and parts of Gloucestershire are radon hotspots," said Neil McColl, Head of Dosimetry Services at the PHE's Centre for Radiation, Chemicals and Environmental Hazards.

"Parts of Cornwall, Aberdeenshire and West Oxfordshire also have high levels and over the years we have worked with people there to help them find out if their home is affected and if it is, to take action to reduce their radon levels.

"It's important people do act because long term exposure to high levels of radon can lead to lung cancer.

"That's why over the next week or so we're writing to almost 18,000 households across Gloucestershire to offer a free test. Testing is easy and it's the only way to tell if you need to act to minimise the risk to you and your family."

The offer is being made to people who live in the parts of the areas covered by the Cotswold, Forest of Dean and Cheltenham Councils where the radon risk is highest.

Radon testing involves placing two plastic detectors, about the size of a biscuit, in key positions around the home. After three months the detectors are posted to PHE where they are analysed and the radon level is calculated. If levels are high PHE will recommend householders take steps to reduce levels. Local advice sessions will then be planned to help provide the information needed.

Dr Peter Brambleby, Director of Public Health for Gloucestershire, said: "Testing for radon is easy and important. Although you may live in a radon affected area it's important to remember that every home is different. Just because your neighbour isn't exposed to high levels, it doesn't mean you won't be, that's why testing is so important. I would urge everyone contacted by Public Health England to take up this free test offer, testing is the only way you can know for sure if radon is a real risk to your health."

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Notes to Editors

1. Letters will be sent to around 8,100 households across Cotswold District Council's area, 9,700 will go to homes in the Forest of Dean District Council's area and about 190 to addresses in Cheltenham Borough Council's area.
2. For interviews or more information please contact the CRCE press office on 01235 825406.
3. Public Health England exists to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. It does this through world-class science, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships and the delivery of specialist public health services. PHE is an operationally autonomous executive agency of the Department of Health. Website: www.gov.uk/phe. Twitter: @PHE_uk, Facebook: www.facebook.com/PublicHealthEngland