

Why Every Home Buyer Needs a St. Louis Home Radon Test

I have been in the home inspection field for over a decade, and if there is one issue that still surprises people in St. Louis, it is radon. You cannot see it, smell it, or taste it, but the science is clear: radon gas is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States, right behind smoking. The Environmental Protection Agency has mapped large swaths of St. Louis and St. Louis County as Zone 1, meaning the average indoor radon levels here are expected to be higher than the national action level. That is why a st louis home radon test is not just a nice extra during a real estate transaction. It is something every buyer and seller should treat as a standard part of the process.

What Radon Is and Why It Matters Here

Radon is a radioactive gas that comes from the natural breakdown of uranium in soil, rock, and water. It seeps up through the ground and can enter a home through cracks in the foundation, gaps around pipes, sump pumps, or even the slab itself. Once inside, it can accumulate to levels that pose a real health risk. The EPA recommends that any home with a reading of 4 picocuries per liter or higher should have radon mitigation installed. In St. Louis, the geology and the clay-heavy soils mean that a surprising number of homes sit above ground that releases radon at moderate to high rates.

I have personally tested homes in Clayton, Kirkwood, and even newer subdivisions out in St. Charles County where the radon levels came back well above the EPA action level. The owners were always shocked because they assumed a new build or a well-sealed house would be safe. That assumption is exactly why a [st louis home radon test](#) matters so much. Radon does not discriminate based on the age of the home or how well it was built. The only way to know is to test.

Short-Term vs. Long-Term Testing: What Works Best for a Home Sale

There are two main approaches to testing: short-term radon test and long-term radon test. A short-term test typically lasts 2 to 7 days. It uses a small test canister or a continuous radon monitor that sits in the lowest livable area of the house. A long-term test runs for 90 days to a year and gives a better picture of the year-round average. For a real estate transaction, the short-term test is the standard. Buyers and sellers need answers within a few days, not months. That is where a continuous radon monitor becomes a real advantage.

Unlike a traditional test canister that you mail off to a lab and wait days for results, a continuous monitor like those made by Airthings or Safety Siren can provide hourly readings.

Some models even have a digital display so you can see the radon levels change in real time. That kind of immediate feedback is incredibly useful during a home inspection or a real estate transaction because it allows the inspector, buyer, and seller to address concerns on the spot rather than waiting for a lab report. Air Sense Environmental uses this approach for their testing in St. Louis. It is faster, and it gives everyone involved more confidence in the result.

How Continuous Monitors Change the Game

A continuous radon monitor runs on a lithium battery and can be placed in the home for a set period, usually 48 to 96 hours for a standard real estate transaction test. It records radon levels every hour, and many models store the data so you can later download a graph showing the spikes and dips. That level of detail is something a passive test canister cannot provide. With a canister, you get one number at the end. With a continuous monitor, you see if the levels jumped at night when the house was closed up or dropped during the day when windows were open. That granular data helps you understand the home's actual radon behavior.

I once tested a home in south St. Louis where the initial 48-hour reading came back at 3.9 picocuries per liter, just under the EPA threshold. But the continuous monitor showed that the levels spiked to over 8 pCi/L during two nights when the homeowners ran the furnace more than usual. If we had used a test canister, we would have missed that spike entirely. The buyer was able to negotiate for radon mitigation before closing, and the seller avoided a lawsuit down the road. That kind of transparency is exactly what a St. Louis home radon test should deliver.

What the EPA Radon Map Shows for St. Louis

The EPA's radon map of Missouri paints St. Louis County and the city of St. Louis in red, which is the highest predicted zone. That does not mean every home will have a problem, but it does mean the probability is high enough that skipping the test is a gamble. I have seen homes in the same subdivision with readings of 2 pCi/L and 12 pCi/L just a few doors apart. Soil composition, drainage, and the way the foundation was poured all affect how much radon enters the house. There is no substitute for an actual measurement at the property you are buying or selling.

Some people assume that because their home passed a radon test five years ago, it is still safe. But radon levels can change over time. The ground shifts, new cracks develop in the foundation, and changes in heating and cooling systems can alter air pressure inside the home, pulling more radon in. That is why the EPA recommends testing every two years and after any major renovation. For a real estate transaction, you want a test that is current and done with a reliable method. A continuous radon monitor from a company like Air Sense Environmental gives you that current snapshot with much more detail than a simple test kit.

Practical Steps for Buyers and Sellers

If you are buying a home in St. Louis, here are a few things to keep in mind when you schedule your radon test:

- Make sure the test is conducted in the lowest livable area of the home, usually the basement or the first floor if there is no basement. The monitor should be placed at least 20 inches above the floor and away from drafts, heat sources, and exterior walls.
- Ask your inspector or testing company whether they use a continuous radon monitor or a passive test canister. For a real estate transaction, a continuous monitor gives you faster results and more data.
- Keep the house closed up for at least 12 hours before the test starts and throughout the test period. That means no open windows, and minimal use of exhaust fans or window air conditioners that could pull in outside air.
- Do not move the monitor during the test. Let it sit undisturbed for the full duration the testing company recommends. If you have a pet, keep the monitor out of its reach.
- If the test shows levels at or above 4 pCi/L, do not panic. Radon mitigation is a proven, affordable solution. A certified radon mitigation contractor can install a sub-slab depressurization system that will bring levels down dramatically, often to below 2 pCi/L.

Why a DIY Test Kit Might Not Be Enough

There are plenty of radon test kits available at hardware stores or online. They are inexpensive and easy to use. But for a real estate transaction, a DIY test kit has some real drawbacks. First, the homeowner might not follow the placement instructions exactly. I have seen test canisters placed in a crawl space where the humidity ruined the charcoal, or left too close to a drafty window. Second, the turnaround time can be a week or more because you have to mail the canister to a lab and wait for the analysis. During a home inspection period that might only last ten days, that delay can create stress and missed deadlines.

A continuous radon monitor handled by a professional testing service like Air Sense Environmental removes those variables. The technician knows where to place the monitor, the device logs data automatically, and the results can be reviewed in near real time. That speed and accuracy is worth the extra cost, especially when a home purchase is on the line. For a few hundred dollars, you get peace of mind and a data-driven answer about one of the most overlooked health risks in St. Louis.

The Bottom Line

Radon is a serious issue in the St. Louis area, and the only way to know if a home has a problem is to test it. A st louis home radon test performed with a continuous radon monitor gives buyers and sellers the fast, reliable information they need to make informed decisions. Whether you are using Air Sense Environmental or another qualified provider, make sure the test is done right, with the house closed up and the monitor placed correctly. That little bit of effort can save you from buying a home with a hidden health hazard or from selling a home that later becomes a liability.

If the test comes back high, remember that radon mitigation is not a disaster. It is a straightforward fix that usually involves a fan and some PVC pipe to vent the gas from under the foundation to above the roofline. The cost is often less than a new water heater, and it can reduce radon levels by 90 percent or more. That is a small price to pay for the safety of your family or the smooth completion of your real estate transaction. Do not skip the test. In St. Louis, it is one of the smartest things you can do during a home sale.