



Colorado Department
of Public Health
and Environment

What You Should Know about Radon in Schools

Background

The Consumer Protection Division (CPD) of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) regulates radon in schools under 6 CCR 1010-6, (10-102). The regulation, adopted in 1991, requires schools to test for radon by March 1, 1991 and keep test results on file at each school for public inspection. New and remodeled schools must test within 19 months of occupancy. Schools must notify CDPHE of remodeling so the department can assess the need for additional radon testing. Schools are not required to share test results with the department. There is no authority to require mitigation, nor is there enforcement authority for schools that do not test. Schools are not required to report the results to teachers or parents.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) does not require radon testing in schools. Most states do not require radon testing in schools.

CPD inspects schools in the following direct-service counties: Alamosa, Conejos, Costilla, Garfield, Grand, Mineral, Moffat, Rio Blanco, Jackson, Rio Grande and Saguache. Schools in other counties may be inspected by their local public health agency. When a violation is present during an inspection, it is documented on an inspection report form. An inspection report that does not have this violation documented indicates presumed compliance with the testing requirement.

CDPHE provides information, guidance and reduced-price coupons for radon test kits to schools and the general public. Coupons and other resources are available at www.coloradoradon.info. The Hazardous Materials Waste Management Division (HMWMD) indoor radon coordinator provides consultation and advice to schools with radon questions. EPA's recommended testing and mitigation procedures are spelled out in "Radon Measurement in Schools (1993)" http://www.epa.gov/radon/pdfs/radon_measurement_in_schools.pdf

The Radiation Advisory Committee has directed HMWMD to compile current statistics on school compliance with 6 CCR 1010-6, (10-102). The division is conducting a school survey that is expected to be complete sometime this summer. As a result of this survey, many schools are working to come into compliance by testing or retesting.

About Radon

- Every Coloradan should be concerned – but not panicky – about radon. Everyone's goal should be to reduce their family's radon exposure, and the best way to do that is by testing your home and installing a mitigation system if radon exceeds the EPA recommended action level of 4.0 picocuries per liter of air.
- Requiring schools to test for radon gives them the data they need to make informed decisions about how to address any radon issues they may have. The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment provides information, consultation and tools to help schools with this task.
- Parents concerned about radon in the schools should talk to their local school board to learn how the district plans to address the problem. And remember that children can spend more than twice as much time at home as they do in school. CDPHE urges all parents to test their homes for radon and take control over that potential exposure pathway.

- Radon is unpredictable and highly site-specific. It can be highly concentrated in one part of a building, and completely absent in another part of the same building so it would be difficult to dictate a one-size-fits all mitigation approach. It's better to require schools to test and then use the results to decide what will work best in each situation. In fact, by requiring schools to test for radon, Colorado exceeds Federal standards, which have no such requirement.
- Radon can be a serious health hazard, but it's important to keep some perspective. First, remember that the majority of an individual's exposure to radon is at home, so all homeowners should test and mitigate. Second, although radon can be dangerous, it's not like immediate health threats, such as carbon monoxide. The risk of exposure to radon is lung cancer. The risk of developing lung cancer increases with exposure to higher radon levels for a longer period of time.