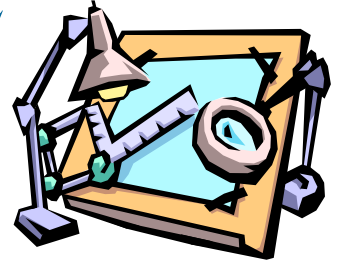


CHB SPOTLIGHT

COLORADO HOME BUILDERS —
YOUR LOCAL CUSTOM HOME BUILDER SINCE 1993



RADON IN YOUR HOME

WHAT IS RADON?

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that is odorless and tasteless. It is formed from the radioactive decay of uranium. Uranium is found in small amounts in most rocks and soil. It slowly breaks down to other products such as radium, which breaks down to radon.

Radon also undergoes radioactive decay. It divides into two parts—one part is called radiation, and the other part is called a daughter. The daughter, like radon, is not stable, and it also divides into radiation and another daughter. The dividing of daughters continues until a stable, non-radioactive daughter is formed. During the decay process, alpha, beta, and gamma radiation are released. Alpha particles can travel only a short distance and cannot travel through your skin. Beta particles can penetrate through your skin, but they cannot go all the way through your body. Gamma radiation can go all the way through your body.

Radon is no longer used in the treatment of various diseases including cancer, arthritis, diabetes, and ulcers. Radon is used to predict earthquakes, in the study of atmospheric transport, and in exploration for petroleum and uranium.

HOW SERIOUS A PROBLEM IS RADON IN THE U.S.?

Radon problems have been identified in every state. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that nearly 1 out of every 15 homes in the U.S. has indoor radon levels at or above the EPA's recommended action guideline level of four picocuries per liter of air (pCi/L) on a yearly average. Radon can be a problem in schools and work places, too.

HOW DOES RADON GET INDOORS?

Radium, which releases radon, is common in the earth's crust. Soils and rocks containing high levels of uranium, such as granite, phosphate, shale and pitchblende are natural sources of radon. High levels of radon in the soil are primarily responsible for radon problems. The radon gas percolates up through porous soils under the home or building and enters through gaps and cracks in the foundation or in the insulation and through pipes, sumps, drains, walls or other openings.

Water is another possible pathway for bringing radon into the home. Water, when in contact with rock containing uranium, absorbs the radon gas. The radon is then carried into the home and released into the air in household dishwashers, faucets, showers, or washing machines. Water-related radon problems usually involve deep private wells rather than community water supplies. In some unusual situations, radon may be released from home construction materials such as stone used to build fireplaces or solar heating storage systems.

Radon is not a problem outdoors because it is quickly diluted to low levels by outdoor air.



RADON IN YOUR HOME (CONTINUE)

IS RADON IS A PROBLEM IN YOUR HOME?

While an area's geology may indicate the potential for radon problems, human senses cannot pick up any evidence of this odorless, colorless gas.

THE ONLY WAY TO DETERMINE IF THERE IS A PROBLEM IN YOUR HOME OR BUILDING IS BY MEASURING THE RADON LEVEL.

Measuring for radon can be done simply and relatively inexpensively. If you prefer, or if you are buying or selling a home, you can hire a trained contractor to do the testing for you.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO REDUCE HIGH LEVELS OF INDOOR RADON?

Today's technology can reduce indoor radon levels to below 4 pCi/L; in most cases, to 2pCi/L or less.

A variety of methods are used to reduce indoor radon levels, from sealing cracks in floors and walls to changing the flow of air into the home. Simple systems, known as sub-slab depressurization, use pipes and fans to remove radon gas from beneath the concrete floor and foundation before it can enter the home. Radon is vented above the roof, where it safely disperses.

Other methods may also work in your home. The right system depends on the design of your home and other factors.

Lowering high radon levels requires technical knowledge and special skills. You should use a contractor who is trained to fix radon problems. The EPA Radon Contractor proficiency (RCP) Program tests these contractors. A trained RCP contractor can study the radon problem in your home and help you choose the right treatment method.

For further information on Radon or Radon Inspections please contact
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QUOTE OF THE MONTH

Without leaps of imagination, or dreaming, we lose the excitement of possibilities. Dreaming, after all, is a form of planning.
Gloria Steinem



SEPTIC SYSTEMS

More than 50,000 homes use septic systems in El Paso County. And failing systems are serious problems, because they pollute the groundwater.

It is important to have your system pumped regularly. The county suggests every two to three years. Otherwise, contaminants could get into you or your neighbor's well.

Even with proper maintenance, a septic system will only last about 25 years. Normally, pumping costs a few hundred dollars. Replacing a system costs thousands

What is a Septic System?

A septic system processes and neutralizes liquid and solid waste that exits your home from stools, sinks and other plumbing fixtures.

A conventional septic system consists of three main parts:

Septic tank

Drain field

Soil beneath the drain field

The Septic Tank

- A temporary, watertight holding tank for waste, often buried near the house
- Tanks usually have a capacity of 1,000 or more gallons.
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- Solids settle to the bottom of the tank and form a layer of sludge.
- Liquid waste exits near the top of the tank and flows through distribution pipes in the drain field.

Septic Drain field

Multiple, gravel-lined trenches, usually 2-3 feet deep, where liquid that exits the tank flows. The drain field is positioned so that gravity allows liquid waste to flow and become distributed into the area.

Perforated distribution pipes are placed in drain field trenches, ensuring that liquid waste can drain over a large area. The bottoms of the trenches are at least 12 inches above the groundwater table, sometimes more depending on the type of soil, so that waste is neutralized before entering.

The drain field is covered with soil before the system is used.

Soil

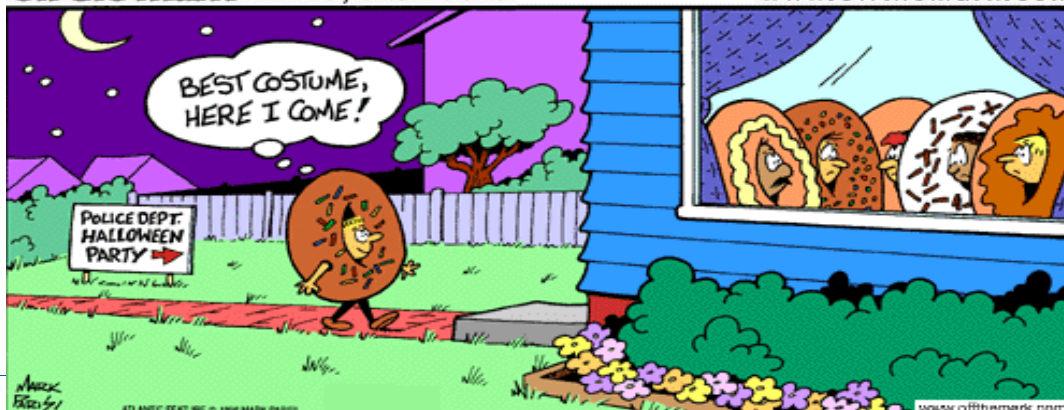
Natural components of soil neutralize bacteria and chemicals before they reach groundwater or nearby rivers and lakes. The ideal soil is aerobic, meaning it contains a good amount of cleansing oxygen, and is not saturated with water.

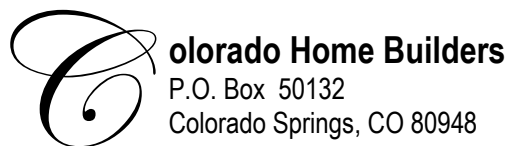


off the mark

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TIP'S FROM THE PROFESSIONALS - STEVE'S HIGHLIGHTS

AVOID COOKING FIRES

Tips to prevent cooking fires:

- Never leave cooking unattended - Two out of five deaths in home cooking fires occur because the cooking was unattended.
- Keep cooking area clean - Always wipe appliances and surfaces after cooking to prevent grease buildup.
- Do not store flammable objects near the stove - Curtains, pot holders, dish towels and food packaging can easily catch fire.
- Always turn pot handles toward the center of the stove - Turning handles inward can prevent pots from being knocked off the stove or pulled down by small children.
- Wear short or close-fitting sleeves when cooking - Fires can occur when clothing comes in contact with stovetop burners.
- Heat cooking oil slowly - Heating oil too quickly can easily start a fire. Never leave hot oil unattended.
- Teach children safe cooking - Young children should be kept at least 3 feet (1 meter) away from the stove while older family members are cooking. Older children should cook only with permission and under the supervision of an adult.

What to do if a cooking fire starts:

- Put a lid on it - If a pan catches fire, carefully slide a lid over the pan and turn off the stove burner. Leave the lid on until completely cool.
- Keep oven or microwave door shut if fire starts - Turn off the heat. If flames do not go out immediately, call the fire department.
- Know how to use a fire extinguisher - Not all fire extinguishers are alike. They are designed for specific types of fire. Make sure you have a clear escape route and the fire department has been called before attempting to extinguish a small fire.
- Water and grease don't mix - Never pour water on a grease fire. Water causes grease fires to spread.
- Know the emergency number for your fire department - If the fire won't go out, call your local fire department



All material contained within was written and compiled by the Colorado Home Builders team.