

Why You Need a Radon Test for Home Sale in St. Louis

If you are selling a home in St. Louis, Missouri, you have likely prepared for the usual steps: a home inspection, a termite check, maybe a sewer scope. But one test that often gets overlooked until the last minute is the radon test for home sale. Radon gas is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that seeps into homes from the soil beneath them. It is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States, according to the EPA, and Missouri has pockets of elevated radon potential. Skipping this test can delay a closing or even kill a deal, so it pays to understand what it involves and how to handle it.

The real estate disclosure laws in Missouri do not require sellers to test for radon before listing. However, once a buyer makes an offer, they can request a radon test as part of the home inspection contingency. More and more buyers are adding a radon test for home sale as a standard buyer contingency. That means you, as the seller, want to be prepared. A surprise radon result above the EPA action level can throw a wrench into negotiations, especially if the closing date is near. Getting ahead of it by testing early or understanding the process can save you stress and money.

How Radon Testing Works in a Real Estate Transaction

Radon testing for a home sale typically uses what is called a short-term radon test. These tests last between 48 and 96 hours and give a snapshot of the radon levels in the home. The test device, often a continuous radon monitor, sits in the lowest lived-in level of the home. That is usually the basement in many St. Louis homes, though it could be the first floor if the basement is unfinished and never used. The EPA recommends that tests be placed in a room that is occupied at least four hours per day, such as a family room, playroom, or office.

A continuous radon monitor is a small electronic device that measures radon levels hour by hour. Unlike older charcoal canisters that you mail to a lab, a continuous monitor gives results on the spot. This is a big advantage during a real estate transaction because time is tight. The seller and buyer do not have to wait for lab analysis. The professional installer who performs the test can provide test results immediately, often within minutes of the test ending. Companies like Air Sense Environmental in St. Louis use these monitors to deliver clear, defensible results that all parties can trust.

What Happens if the Test Shows High Radon?

The EPA has set an action level of 4.0 picocuries per liter (pCi/L). If the short-term test results come back at or above that level, the EPA recommends fixing the problem. In a home sale

context, that usually means the buyer will ask the seller to install a radon mitigation system. The most common type of mitigation for homes in the St. Louis area is sub-slab depressurization. A radon mitigation contractor drills a small hole in the basement floor, inserts a pipe, and installs a fan that pulls radon gas from beneath the slab and vents it safely above the roofline.

This is not a DIY job. A professional installer with experience in radon mitigation knows how to design a system that works for the specific foundation, soil type, and house layout. The cost for a typical sub-slab depressurization system in Missouri runs between \$800 and \$1,500. That may sound like a lot, but it is small compared to the cost of a failed home sale or the health risks of long-term radon exposure. Many buyers will agree to split the cost or accept a credit at closing, especially if the seller tests early and gives them time to negotiate.

One thing to note: a short-term radon test gives you a preliminary result, but a long-term radon test is more accurate for understanding the average level over a full year. In a home sale, however, you rarely have three to twelve months to run a long-term test. That is why the EPA and most home inspection standards accept a properly conducted short-term test for the transaction. The key is following the test protocol exactly: keep windows and doors closed for at least 12 hours before and during the test, avoid operating whole-house fans or window air conditioners that bring in outside air, and place the monitor where it will not be disturbed.

Radon and the Closing Process

Once the test is done and the results are in, the numbers go into the transaction file. The closing disclosure is the final loan document that lists all the fees and credits, but the radon results themselves usually appear as an addendum or a separate report. If the radon level is below the action level, most buyers will sign off and move forward. If it is above, the buyer contingency kicks in, and the parties negotiate. Having a [radon test for home sale](#) completed early in the due diligence period gives both sides room to work out a solution without rushing.

Real estate agents in St. Louis are increasingly familiar with radon. They know that the EPA map shows parts of Missouri, especially the central and eastern regions including St. Louis County, having a moderate to high radon potential. That does not mean every home has a problem, but it means the risk is real enough that buyers should test. Some agents even recommend that sellers test before listing so they can either disclose a low level upfront or fix the issue and market the home as radon-ready.

Common Mistakes Home Sellers Make with Radon

I have seen sellers make a few recurring mistakes when it comes to radon testing. One is waiting until the last week before closing to run the test. If the test comes back high, there may

not be enough time to install a mitigation system and retest before the closing date. Another mistake is trying to game the test by opening windows or running fans to lower the reading. The continuous radon monitor records data over the entire test period, and any tampering is usually obvious in the data. Plus, that kind of approach is dishonest and can come back to bite you if the buyer asks for a second test or walks away.

A third mistake is assuming a short-term test is all you need forever. If you are staying in the home, a long-term radon test gives a better picture of your year-round exposure. But for a sale, the short-term test is the standard. Just make sure you hire someone who uses a continuous radon monitor and follows the EPA test protocol. Air Sense Environmental, for example, provides a clear report that explains the results and what they mean. That level of professionalism matters when the buyer and their agent are looking at the numbers.

Why Hire a Professional Instead of Doing It Yourself

You can buy a home radon test kit at a hardware store for about 15 to 30 dollars. The problem is that the test protocol is strict, and small mistakes can invalidate the results. If you leave a window cracked, put the test in a damp basement, or move the device during the test, the numbers may be wrong. In a real estate transaction, the buyer is unlikely to accept a DIY test as final. They want a test performed by an independent professional who has no financial interest in the outcome. That is why most purchase agreements specify that the radon test must be conducted by a certified or state-licensed tester.

A professional tester also brings a continuous radon monitor, which gives more reliable data than a charcoal canister. The monitor logs the radon levels every hour, so if there is a spike in the middle of the night or a drop during a storm, the data shows it. The tester can also check for conditions that might affect the test, such as a radon mitigation system that is not running or a crawl space that needs sealing. All of this adds credibility to the results.

Final Thoughts on Radon and Your Home Sale

Radon gas is invisible, odorless, and tasteless, but it can have serious health effects. Lung cancer from radon exposure is preventable, and the first step is testing. If you are selling a home in St. Louis, Missouri, incorporating a radon test for home sale into your transaction is a smart move. It protects the buyer, protects you from future liability, and keeps the deal moving smoothly. The cost is small compared to the peace of mind it provides. Whether you test before listing or during the due diligence period, make sure you use a qualified professional with a continuous radon monitor, follow the test protocol, and know your options if the results are above the action level. That way, everyone can sign the closing disclosure with confidence.