

# Santa Cruz County Cancerous Radon Level Triples National Average

*Traces of dangerous radon are found in all homes, but there are ways to protect yourself from it.*

**Jacob Bourne, Scotts Valley Patch, 1-15-13**

Radon — a tasteless, colorless, odorless gas — is everywhere. It comes from the decay of uranium in soil and then accumulates in homes, where it can become dangerous.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), "elevated levels of [radon] are the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers."

Radon in buildings is measured in picocuries per liter (pCi/L). What that actually means is less important than knowing when your home has exceeded the safety threshold of radon pCi/L. EPA standards place the "take action" level at 4 pCi/L, meaning if radon levels reach or surpass that in a home, business, school or other building, the stewards of that building should do something about it.

The national indoor average radon level is 1.3 pCi/L, far below the level necessary to take action. But in Santa Cruz County, according to the website California Radon Information, the average level is 3.6 pCi/L, much closer to the danger zone. Eleven percent of homes in the county are above the 4 pCi/L threshold.

The [California Department of Conservation radon map](#) shows the greatest area of radon risk in Santa Cruz County is near Felton, Ben Lomond and Scotts Valley, with lower levels in the more urban areas. In a recent radon testing sweep of the county, 28 percent of Ben Lomond homes tested in the danger zone, followed by 24 percent in Felton and 13 percent in Scotts Valley. Just one of the 223 Watsonville homes tested above 4 pCi/L.

But high radon levels do not doom us all to cancer. There are a few steps that can be taken to prevent risks presented by radon:

**Test.** There are do-it-yourself radon testing kits available online and at hardware stores.

**Fix:** Contact a radon reduction contractor if your radon level is too high.

**Save a Life:** According to the EPA, 21,000 people die of lung cancer every year. Staying on top of dangerous radon levels is an easy way to prevent death.

To find a qualified radon professional, obtain a test kit or contact your state radon office, visit [www.epa.gov/radon](http://www.epa.gov/radon) or call 1-800-SOS-RADON.