



What is radon and what should brokers do to protect their clients?

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QUESTION: I represented a buyer who purchased a beautiful home served by a private well on the property. During due diligence, we hired a company to perform a radon test of the air inside the home, along with every other inspection we could think of. The levels of radon in the air were much lower than the level at which the EPA recommends mitigation. My clients recently discovered that their water contains levels of radon requiring mitigation. What is a broker to do? I thought I had been so diligent and thorough by suggesting and obtaining the tests and inspections we had, but it seems there is something new to worry about with every transaction I close.

ANSWER: Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas released in rock, soil, and water that can enter any home. In fact, radon has been found at high levels in every state and is the number one cause of lung cancer among people who do not smoke. A map of radon zones can be viewed [here](#). Radon is measured in picocuries per liter of air (pCi/L), which is a standard measurement of radioactivity.

The North Carolina Real Estate Commission and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) consider a level of 4 pCi/L or greater the level at which disclosure or mitigation are needed, respectively. It would be best practice to always ask a seller if they have seen any radon test result for their property and to encourage all buyers to obtain a test during due diligence. If a seller is aware of levels of radon in the home at or greater than 4 pCi/L, it must be disclosed as a material fact.

Whenever there is any amount of radon found in the air, it would be wise to educate your clients that one possible source contributing to the radon levels in a home is the water entering through the home's plumbing. While most municipal water supplies are tested and you can obtain reports from the local provider, it is also advisable that a home on well water should be tested, not only for water quality, but also to determine the level of radon in the water source. There are mitigation or reduction techniques and other helpful information published by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, which can be viewed [here](#).

Once a home has a radon mitigation or reduction system installed, the system should be maintained and monitored as directed by the installer and the presence of this system would be a material fact to disclose to prospective buyers prior to receiving any offers to purchase. Remember that although there are portions of North Carolina where radon is more or less likely to be present, no home is immune from possibly having unsafe levels of radon unless it has a properly installed and maintained radon reduction system.

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