

POINTS OF CONTACT

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Northern Radon Liaison Group
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Radon South West Committee, Secretary
c/o Environmental Health
Teignbridge District Council
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Steering Group on Radon
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Derbyshire Radon Steering Group
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Somerset Radon Campaign Steering Group
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Short-term Radon Testing

Most companies which provide radon measurement services use detectors which are placed in houses for three months, but some companies offer detectors which are placed for a week or less. To clarify the circumstances in which such short-term tests would be appropriate, the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) issued the following statement recently:

The health risk from radon depends upon the total exposure over time so it is the long-term average radon concentration in a home that is important.

Radon levels in houses vary substantially from day to day as they are influenced by weather conditions. The Action Level refers to the annual average concentration in a home. For this reason, it is preferred that radon measurements are carried out with two detectors (in a bedroom and living room) and are conducted over a reasonable period of time, typically three months or more. This averages out short-term fluctuations.

Sometimes, however, the requirement exists to obtain an estimate of the radon concentration within a building in a much shorter period of time. NRPB re-iterates its

advice that such short-term measurements, carried out over a fortnight or less, will give less accurate estimates of the long-term average concentration, but may be sufficient for screening purposes.

Short-term measurements will, in many cases, and particularly in lower risk areas, show such a low radon level that it is reasonably certain that the long term radon concentration is below the Action Level. In these circumstances, further testing is not required.

However, in other dwellings, and particularly in high risk areas, the screening measurement will give a higher result. Long-term measurements are then required to determine whether or not the radon concentration is above the Action Level.

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Note: NRPB has already issued advice on how to apply the results of measurements made using charcoal detectors, which are normally exposed in houses for 4-7 days. It advised that if the result of such a measurement is less than 75 Bq m⁻³ it is reasonably certain that the annual average level is below the Action Level of 200 Bq m⁻³. If the result is above 75 Bq m⁻³ then a long term measurement is required.

A Healthy Lifestyle, Radon and the Palace of Westminster - continued

for existing dwellings and radon prevention in new dwellings as well as sources of further information.

There is also a brief history of successive government radon campaigns since 1987 and a more detailed discussion of the new three-year roll-out programme involving over 30 local authorities.

This was announced by the Environment Minister, Michael Meacher, in July last year and began in earnest early this year in the North West of England.

Copies of postnotes and more details of POST can be found on their website:
www.parliament.uk/post/home.htm