

The risks of RADON

This region is prone to high levels of the invisible danger. What can you do about it?



The Enquirer / Meggan Booker

When David and Michelle Cagwin (holding son Ethan) finished the basement in their Loveland home they installed a system that reduces radon levels.

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You might have missed the U.S. surgeon general's recent warning about the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers and the nation's second leading cause of lung cancer, behind smoking. The culprit is radon, an invisible, odorless and tasteless radioactive gas that leaches through soil and seeps into homes. It's blamed for 20,000 lung-cancer related deaths every year in the United States.

Half of all homes in Ohio have "unsafe" radon levels, and the number of people living in Ohio counties with "elevated" levels - including Hamilton, Butler and Warren counties - is the second largest in the United States, according to the EPA's most recent analysis of 1990 Census data. Pennsylvania had the greatest number of people living in areas of elevated radon levels. Kentucky ranked 17th.

"In my mind, it's not whether you have (radon) or not, it's how much do you have, and what do you need to do about it," says Liz James, radon program administrator with the Ohio Department of Health.



David Holmes, a radon specialist, points out the radon mitigation system piping installed in the Cagwins' basement. The EPA recommends all homeowners conduct a short-term radon test.

INSIDE

Why this region is a hot spot for radon and what you can do to rid your home of the risk. **B2**