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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Radon: How Healthy is Your Home?

The Sarpy/Cass Health Department is urging residents to test their homes for radon gas. Free short-term radon test kits are available to Sarpy and Cass County residents at the health department's office at 701 Olson Drive, Suite 101 in Papillion. The kits are available Monday – Friday from 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Quantities are limited, and are available only while supplies last.

According to Jenny Steventon, the health department's Environmental Health Coordinator, "Indoor radon is the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers in the United States. Breathing radon over prolonged periods can present a significant health risk. This threat is preventable. Radon can be detected with a simple, inexpensive test and fixed through affordable venting techniques."

Radon is a naturally occurring, odorless, and colorless gas produced by the breakdown of uranium in soil, rock, and water. Because radon is a gas, it can enter buildings through small cracks and other openings in the foundation. Once inside, it decays into alpha particles that damage the DNA of lung tissue, a major cause of lung cancer.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reports that radon causes between 15,000 and 22,000 lung cancer deaths every year in the United States, and estimates that one in every 15 homes nationwide has a high radon level at or above the recommended radon action level of 4 pico Curies per liter (pCi/L) of air.

"The Sarpy/Cass Health Department recommends that everyone test their home for radon, either by hiring a licensed radon professional or using do-it-yourself short-term or long-term home test kits," Steventon said. "Short-term tests are run for approximately 48 hours and give a "snapshot" of the radon buildup over those two days. Long-term tests are run for up to one year and reveal a better representation of what the radon levels are like during normal living conditions." Steventon recommends first testing with a short-term test kit.

The Nebraska Radon Program at the Nebraska Department of Health & Human Services maintains a database of statewide residential radon testing. Tested Cass County homes have an average radon concentration of 8.8 pCi/L of air, and 6.1 pCi/L of air in tested Sarpy County homes.

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