



BUILDING CONTROL INFORMATION SHEET



Radon

Radon is a naturally occurring, colourless, odourless gas, which is radioactive and can enter buildings as a result of passing through cracks and fissures in the sub-soil. In high concentrations over a prolonged period of time, this gas has been linked to lung cancer.

'The Indicative Atlas of Radon in England and Wales', was released on 12th November 2007, and has been produced jointly by the Health Protection Agency (HPA) and British Geological Survey (BGS). This Atlas supersedes the NRPB – W26 Radon Atlas 2002.

This Atlas defines 'Radon Affected Areas' in England and Wales. It is based on the results of measurements of radon in 460,000 homes. Although the radon data used in the production of this atlas comes from measurements in homes, the maps indicate the likely extent of the local radon hazard in all buildings.

'Radon Affected Areas' are parts of the Country with a 1% (or more) probability of present or future properties being above the 'Radon Action Level'. It is recommended that the level of Radon gas should be measured in all properties within 'Radon Affected Areas'.

The [Radon Risk Report](http://www.ukradon.org) available from www.ukradon.org provides information on whether existing properties are in areas where Radon protective measures are required. The requirement for Radon protective measures for building sites is available through the British Geological Survey [GeoReports service](http://www.bgs.gov.uk).

If, as will be found in most cases, the result is under the 'Radon Action Level' for radon, 200 Bqm-3, the property does not need to have the radon level reduced. If the result is over 200 Bqm-3, then there is a problem. In homes that do have a radon problem, the radon level can usually be reduced with simple, effective and reasonably inexpensive measures.

It is very easy to test for the presence of Radon gas in an existing property. The current cost of a measurement is £39.95 including VAT. This includes the supply of two radon detectors, their subsequent analysis and the reporting of the result. All packaging and return postage are also included. Further information is available from the [HPA](http://www.hpa.gov.uk) (01235 831600).

In addition, relatively straightforward measures are available to protect occupants of existing properties if Radon gas levels are found to be above the action level. These measures will depend upon the construction of the property and the concentration of Radon; it may be necessary for instance to install additional airbricks to improve ventilation under the floor.

The [Building Research Establishment](http://www.bre.co.uk) suggest that it is as easy to deal with as any other building defect that might be encountered when a survey is carried out, such as rising damp or timber decay. They do not consider it should be a reason for not buying a property.

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