



April 22, 2021

To Administrators and Facilities Managers in Alaska School Districts:

I'm writing from the Alaska Division of Geological & Geophysical Surveys (DGGS) to encourage you to test the buildings in your school district for radon gas. We offer advice on radon testing to Alaskan residents, schools, and other facilities in partnership with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation's Division of Air Quality and the University of Alaska Fairbanks' Cooperative Extension Service. Our goal is to help Alaskans understand the risks and test for radon gas in indoor settings throughout the state. We also offer guidance for reducing concentrations of radon gas, if present.

#### **Why should you test for radon gas?**

- Radon is a naturally occurring gas that poses real long-term health risks, most notably lung cancer. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer after smoking.
- Although radon's prevalence is relatively unknown in some parts of Alaska, several regions of higher radon potential are appearing as we do more testing.
- Radon is a colorless, odorless gas. The only way to know if it's present is to test.
- There's peace of mind in knowing that the radon gas concentration is low in your workplace. This knowledge can also alleviate concerns of parents and teachers.

#### **Is it difficult, and how long does it take?**

- Testing for radon is relatively easy, even in school settings. Tests will remain in place for less than a week while the school is under "closed conditions" (i.e., no open doors/windows for ventilation). All classrooms in direct contact with the ground will be tested, along with 10% of classrooms on upper stories. Testing can be performed during breaks or summer if ventilation and temperature conditions are set for regular school-day occupancy.
- The U.S. EPA recommends that schools test for radon every five years. Some schools in Alaska have already been tested but are due for testing again.

#### **What if we find radon gas?**

- Radon gas is present in most buildings at low levels. If the levels are above the limit set by the U.S. EPA, we will help advise you how to lower radon concentrations in your buildings.

Knowing your schools' radon concentrations reduces a major Indoor Air Quality health and safety risk to students and staff. If you're interested in testing for radon in your schools/facilities

or learning more, please contact Jennifer Athey by email ([jennifer.athey@alaska.gov](mailto:jennifer.athey@alaska.gov)) or phone (907-451-5028), or contact the Alaska Radon Hotline number at 1-800-478-8324. DGGs has educational radon materials on its website at <https://dgg.alaska.gov/hazards/radon.html>, where you'll find a link to an interactive map of known radon prevalence throughout the state. Current radon standards of practice endorsed by the U.S. EPA for use in schools can be found at <https://www.epa.gov/radon/radon-schools>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Athey', written in a cursive style.

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