



Radon Test Results: Questions and Answers

June 14, 2016

Portland Public Schools will update and maintain a list of frequently asked questions and answers regarding radon testing. Questions can be submitted at pubinfo@pps.net.

Radon Monitoring

Q: What is radon and how is it measured?

A: Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that enters from the soil beneath the school through cracks and openings in the foundation. There are high levels of naturally occurring radon in several locations throughout Portland. Radon in the air is measured in units of picocuries per liter (pCi/L).

Q: What is the recent history of radon testing in PPS schools?

A: PPS last monitored for radon district-wide in 2001. [Results from those tests are available here](#). In rooms where radon levels exceeded 4 pCi/L (picocuries per liter), PPS took remediation action to reduce radon levels. The results from 2001 informed the focus for the monitoring we began this spring led by PBS Environmental.

Q: What prompted PPS to test for radon this spring and when did the testing occur?

A: PPS competitively solicited proposals and hired PBS Environmental in March 2016 to begin conducting district-wide radon monitoring in compliance with new state legislation mandating radon testing in every public school by January 2021.

Q: How many rooms were tested for radon this spring and what were the results?

A: PPS tested 801 rooms across the district, focusing on 26 buildings that showed historically higher radon levels in 2001. Of the 801 rooms, 121 rooms exceeded the EPA's "initial action level" but were below the EPA's "higher action level." Another nine rooms in six schools showed radon levels in excess of the EPA's "higher action level". [Results from this spring's testing can be found here](#) (*Excel document will download to your computer*).

Q: What is PPS doing to mitigate radon exposure in our classrooms?

A: Beginning the week of June 6, followed the EPA's guidelines for conducting follow-up monitoring in the nine rooms in six schools with "higher action levels". The district is awaiting results of this second round of monitoring and will promptly share them. Further action will be based on those results.

Q: How do you determine which buildings need mitigation?

A: Mitigation will be based on the results of the second round of monitoring, which took place the week of June 6. Results are forthcoming.

Q: PPS has tested 26 schools for radon. Will all schools be monitored?

A: All district buildings will be monitored in compliance with new state legislation mandating radon testing in every public school by January 2021. Broad based testing will continue in fall 2016 when the heating season begins, which follows EPA guidelines.