

Why a Radon Test for Home Sale Is a Smart Move in St. Louis

If you are selling a home in St. Louis, you have probably heard about lead paint, foundation cracks, and knob-and-tube wiring. But radon gas is one of those invisible issues that many homeowners overlook until a buyer brings it up. That is where a radon test for home sale becomes more than just a nice gesture. It can determine whether your deal closes smoothly or stalls for weeks.

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that comes from the breakdown of uranium in soil. It seeps into homes through cracks in the foundation, gaps around pipes, and even through sump pumps. The St. Louis area sits in EPA radon zone 1, meaning the average indoor radon level is predicted to be above the EPA action limit of 4.0 picocuries per liter. That is not a scare tactic. It is a geological fact. The limestone and glacial till common in this region release radon at higher rates than many other parts of the country.

How Radon Shows Up in a Real Estate Transaction

When a buyer makes an offer, they typically have an inspection period. During that time, a home inspector or a specialist can perform a [radon test for home sale](#). The test usually runs for 48 hours to several days, depending on the method. If the result comes back at or above 4.0 pCi/L, the buyer may request a radon mitigation system. That can be a point of negotiation or a deal breaker if the seller is caught off guard.

I have seen sellers panic when a test result comes in at 8.5 pCi/L and they have no idea what to do. They scramble for quotes, delay the closing, and sometimes lose the buyer entirely. A proactive approach can avoid that. Testing before listing gives you time to install a mitigation system, retest, and show a clean report to potential buyers. It also keeps you from having to fill out a radon disclosure form with an unknown or high number.

The Right Tool for the Job

There are two common ways to measure radon: short-term radon test and long-term radon test. The short-term test uses a charcoal canister or an electronic radon detector that sits in the lowest livable area of the home for a few days. It gives a quick snapshot, which is often what real estate agents and buyer agents prefer during a transaction. The long-term test runs for 90 days or more and gives a more accurate annual average. But in a home sale, time is usually tight.

For the most reliable results in a sale situation, I recommend a continuous radon monitor. These devices measure radon levels every hour and record fluctuations. They are less prone to tampering and provide a data log that a buyer can trust. Companies like Air Sense Environmental use these monitors for St. Louis real estate transactions because they deliver fast, defensible numbers. A charcoal canister can be affected by drafts, humidity, and improper placement. A continuous monitor gives you a much clearer picture.

That said, a charcoal canister is still a valid option if you follow the instructions exactly. You close the house for 12 hours before the test begins, keep windows and doors shut during the test, and run the HVAC normally. If you open a window even for a minute, the test is invalid. That is one reason why a radon test for home sale handled by a professional is often worth the cost. They know the protocol and can document that everything was done correctly.

What Happens If Radon Is High?

First, do not panic. High radon is fixable. The most common solution in St. Louis is a sub-slab depressurization system, also called a soil suction system. A radon reduction specialist drills a hole through the basement floor, creates a suction point, and runs a pipe with a fan to vent the gas outside. The fan runs continuously and pulls radon from under the slab before it can enter the home. This type of system typically costs between \$1,000 and \$2,500, depending on the complexity of the foundation.

After installation, a follow-up test confirms the system is working. In most cases, levels drop well below the EPA action limit. I have seen 12.0 pCi/L homes drop to 1.2 pCi/L after a proper installation. That is a huge relief for both the seller and the buyer.

It is also worth noting that Missouri has a Radon Program within the Department of Health and Senior Services. They provide test kits at low cost and offer guidance on mitigation. If you are unsure where to start, the Missouri Radon Program is a solid resource. They can also help you interpret results and find a certified contractor.

Disclosure and Liability

Missouri does not require a seller to test for radon before listing. But if you know you have a radon problem, you must disclose it. The seller disclosure form asks about radon, and lying on it can come back to haunt you. If a buyer discovers after closing that you hid a known issue, you could face legal action or be forced to pay for mitigation out of pocket. That is a bad outcome for everyone.

Some buyers waive the radon test if the seller provides a recent clean report. That is a strong selling point. It shows you are transparent and have already taken care of the problem. In a competitive market, that can tip the scales in your favor.

Practical Advice for Home Sellers

If you are planning to sell your home in St. Louis, here are a few steps to consider:

- Test early. Do not wait for the buyer to request it. A radon test for home sale that you initiate gives you control over the timeline.
- Use a professional service like Air Sense Environmental that specializes in real estate transactions. They know the protocols and can provide results quickly.
- If the test shows high levels, get quotes for a radon mitigation system immediately. Do not wait until the buyer issues a contingency.
- Keep the test report handy for the seller disclosure form. It documents your good faith effort.
- Consider a continuous radon monitor for the test. It provides more reliable data and can speed up the process if a retest is needed.

For Buyers: What to Look For

If you are buying a home, never skip the radon test. Even if the house looks perfect, radon can be present. Ask your buyer agent to include a radon test contingency in the offer. That way, you can back out or negotiate if levels are high. Also, ask whether the seller has already tested and what the results were. If they hand you a report from three years ago, ask for a new test. Radon levels can change over time due to soil settling, new construction nearby, or changes in the water table.

When the test is done, make sure it is placed in the lowest lived-in level of the home. Do not let anyone place it in a crawlspace or an unfinished basement unless that is where people spend time. The goal is to measure the air you actually breathe.

Final Thoughts

Radon is a manageable problem, but it requires attention. A radon test for home sale is a small investment compared to the cost of a lost deal or a lawsuit. In St. Louis real estate, where radon is common, being proactive is the smart play. Whether you are a seller wanting to avoid surprises or a buyer protecting your health, the test gives you facts to work with. And facts are always better than guesses.

Do not let radon be the reason your home sale falls apart. Test it, fix it if needed, and move on with confidence. That is what experienced homeowners and agents do.