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## Frequently asked questions – Minneapolis Public Schools radon testing

(Updated 5.8.2018)

### What is radon?

Radon is an odorless, colorless gas that can cause significant health problems. [According to the EPA](#), the gas is produced by the natural breakdown of uranium in soil, rock and water and gets into the air we breathe. Radon can be found all over the U.S. in any type of building — homes, offices, and schools — and result in a high indoor radon level.

The EPA requires action to be taken when radon levels are above 4 pCi/L. While there is no safe level of radon exposure, the average indoor radon level is estimated to be about 1.3 pCi/L, and about 0.4 pCi/L of radon is normally found in the outside air.

### Does MPS test for radon?

Yes. In 2017, MPS re-initiated a radon testing program. The district previously tested for radon in 1996.

### How often does MPS test for radon?

MPS conducts tests in every building on a five-year rotation. In Minnesota, it is best to perform radon testing between November 1 and March 31, and samples are set up to run for a minimum of 90 days.

### How many schools are tested each year?

In 2017, the testing program started with 6 schools. MPS will be testing 15 schools every year in the future. The next set of buildings will be tested in November.

### When were the last radon tests conducted?

All schools were tested in 1996.

### Why was there such a long gap between testing?

District leadership has placed a priority on wellness initiatives, including radon testing, and with this focus MPS restarted the testing program in 2017.

### How many schools have tested as having radon?

The six sites tested in 2017 all had radon levels below the EPA action limit of 4.pCi/L. Eight schools tested in 1996 had levels above the EPA action limit.

### What happens when a test comes back as having radon?

First, the ventilation in the room is checked to make sure it is working properly and providing sufficient outside fresh air. The location is then re-tested. If the location is above the identified ~~above the~~ EPA Action level on the second test, a radon mitigation system would be installed.

### Have you retested the eight schools that had higher levels of radon?

Yes, locations that were identified above the EPA action level had testing performed to confirm the effectiveness of the mitigation as outlined above.



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**Is my school safe to attend if it hasn't been tested?**

Yes. Since the comprehensive radon testing in 1996, MPS took steps to address heightened radon levels where indicated. In addition, MPS mechanical ventilation systems provide outside fresh air to all occupied spaces that meet industry standards, which effectively prevents increased radon levels.

**Does MPS test every ground level room as recommended?**

It is the plan to test all occupied rooms in the school. Testing is not performed in storage, utility or mechanical rooms. In some cases where there is a suite of small rooms, an individual sample may be used to represent a small area. It is also possible that during the 90 day testing period, sample cassettes may go missing from a room.

**Where can I see a testing schedule?**

The five year radon testing schedule is available [online](#), or by contacting Lee Setter, Manager for Environmental Health and Safety, at [lee.setter@mpls.k12.mn.us](mailto:lee.setter@mpls.k12.mn.us) or 612-668-0308. Please note the schedule is subject to change or be updated.

**Where/how can I see a testing report for my school?**

Available reports can be obtained by contacting Lee Setter, Manager for Environmental Health and Safety, at [lee.setter@mpls.k12.mn.us](mailto:lee.setter@mpls.k12.mn.us) or 612.668.0308.

**Are radon testing results reported to the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH)?**

As MPS moves forward with testing for radon in all school facilities, testing reports will be shared with MDH per their guideline.

**Where can I learn more?**

The Environmental Protection Agency and the Minnesota Department of Health have great resources.

- <https://www.epa.gov/radon>
- [https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-02/documents/2012\\_a\\_citizens\\_guide\\_to\\_radon.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-02/documents/2012_a_citizens_guide_to_radon.pdf)
- [https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-12/documents/2016\\_consumers\\_guide\\_to\\_radon\\_reduction.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-12/documents/2016_consumers_guide_to_radon_reduction.pdf)
- <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/indoorair/radon/>
- <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/indoorair/schools/radonschool.html>
- <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/indoorair/schools/radontestingschools.pdf>