

homefinder

ASK A REMODELER

Seal cracks, joints to curb radon gas

Question: How serious a problem is radon gas, and what can I do to remove it from my home?

Answer: Radon gas is an odorless, tasteless radioactive gas formed when uranium breaks down in the soil.

Radon creeps into homes through exposed soil in crawl spaces and openings in the foundation.

When high levels of radon gas are present indoors, people are exposed to



Steve Gray is the owner of Steve Gray Renovations Inc.

more radiation, and their cancer risk increases. But once discovered, this problem can be easily corrected.

Before any testing for radon is performed, you should first answer these questions:

» Does your home have a crawl space? If so, is there plastic sheeting installed over the pea gravel or floor of that space? The plastic sheeting would be commonly called a vapor barrier.

» Have any cracks that are visible in concrete floors and walls been sealed?

Have you sealed the joint where the concrete floor meets the concrete walls?

» Are there sealed lids over cellar sump-pump pits or openings for sewage-ejector pumps? These areas must be sealed off to stop radon gases from entering your home!

A silicone-based caulk is best for these types of repairs. I can't stress enough to get your sump-pump holes and ejector pits sealed off.

By sealing off all entrance points into the home, a homeowner can effectively reduce radon gas to a nontoxic level.

Once all of these areas are addressed, I advise our clients to open up the home to bring in some fresh air before testing for radon.

That way, if there was radon gas present and you have corrected the items

listed above, the test results will better reflect the new conditions of the home.

Radon test kits are now available in most hardware stores, and the test can be performed by any homeowner. They have specific instructions on administering the test and a chart showing what levels of radon gas are acceptable.

A digital radon gas monitoring system that can run continuously is also something you may want to consider. This system can offer a little more peace of mind for a homeowner.

★ This expert is a member of the Builders Association of Greater Indianapolis. If you have a question or idea for a column topic, e-mail it to dwight.adams@indystar.com, or mail it to: Ask a Remodeler, The Indianapolis Star, P.O. Box 145, Indianapolis, IN 46206-0145.

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