



Radon Tests Made Easier

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Radon testing is a common occurrence in real estate transactions. About half of the inspections I perform also include a radon test. Since these tests can be an added stressor for all parties involved, I want to give you some information that will make dealing with them easier for you, your seller and the inspector.

The two things I feel make the most difference in making a test easier are knowledge and communication. If you as a Realtor know what must happen to get a good test, and you or your office communicate that to a seller, most of the stress will be eliminated for everyone. You might be wondering why the inspector doesn't take care of the communication part. We would, but we rarely speak to the seller. That communication is usually handled by the selling agent or their office. Hence the inspector relies on them.

So, what do you need to know? The main thing you need to know is that 12 hours prior to and during a radon test, "closed house conditions" must exist. This means that all doors and windows must be kept closed, EXCEPT FOR normal entry and exit. I stress "except for" because when a seller, or occupant, hears the words "closed house conditions must exist" they think they can't enter or leave the home and panic. This is not true. They can come and go as they please, but while home or away the doors and windows need to be closed. Closed house conditions also means that swamp coolers and whole house fans must be left off. Other vent fans, like in the bathroom or kitchen, can be used when needed.

Above, I mentioned that closed house conditions MUST exist 12 hours PRIOR TO the start of the test. This is a requirement of the EPA testing protocols that most people, including many inspectors, don't know about. This requirement is sometimes difficult to comply with if the testing is done with canister type testing devices. If the inspector arrives at the property with this type of device and closed house conditions don't exist, they shouldn't start the test. If the inspector uses a continuous type radon monitor they can start the test and ignore the first 12 hours of data easily. This requires that testing be extended 12 hours beyond the normal 48 hours of testing. However, this allows a valid test to be performed without an additional trip by the inspector or a substantial delay in obtaining results.

While it is important for you to know and understand this information, it is more important that this information be communicated to the seller of the home. We all resent being informed about an impact such as this on our lives at the last minute. Sellers are no exception. The best time for this information to be communicated is when the inspection is scheduled. Hopefully the inspector will mention to the scheduler that a radon test has been requested, but if not, the

scheduler should inquire if a radon test will be performed (many showing desks already do this). If a radon test has been requested the seller should then be made aware of the radon test and related requirements at the same time they are told about the inspection date and time. Then when the seller arrives home and find radon testing equipment and a note telling them that their home needs to remain closed for two days they're psychologically prepared.