

Radon at Work

A guide for workers and health & safety committees · Reviewed August 2026 · RadonTest.ca

Current version, and the citable source for this document:

radontest.ca/blogs/articles/radon-at-work-guide-for-workers-and-committees

The short version. Ask — in writing, through your committee — whether the building has been tested. A proper test is long-term (three months or more, heating season), with a detector in **every occupied room in ground contact**, not one detector for the building. Health Canada recommends action above 200 Bq/m³. If the question is ignored, an escalation route exists.

Why this matters

Radon is a radioactive gas that seeps out of the ground into buildings. You cannot see, smell or taste it at any concentration. It is the second leading cause of lung cancer in Canada after smoking, and the leading cause among people who have never smoked. Risk depends on concentration multiplied by time, and lung cancer from radon can take decades to appear — which is why an exposure today matters long after the job ends.

The rules are changing. On **30 January 2027**, the radon exposure limit for federally regulated workplaces drops from 800 Bq/m³ to **200 Bq/m³**, measured as an annual average. The regulation puts the duty explicitly on the employer: *the employer must ensure* no employee is exposed above that level.

If your workplace is **provincially regulated**, that limit does not apply to you — but your province's general duty clause requires your employer to take reasonable precautions against recognised hazards, and radon is one.

Is your workplace covered by the federal limit?

Covered	Not covered (provincial rules apply)
A chartered bank · an airline or airport operation · a railway · an interprovincial trucking or bus company · marine shipping or a port · a pipeline · a telecom or broadcaster · Canada Post or a courier · a grain elevator or feed mill · a Crown corporation · a First Nations band council · the federal public service.	A provincial or municipal employer · a school board · a hospital · a university · a retailer · a manufacturer · a construction firm · most credit unions · a trucking company operating within one province.

Step 1 — Ask whether the building has been tested

The single most useful thing you can do. Put it in writing, through your joint health and safety committee, policy committee, or health and safety representative. Suggested wording:

“Has this building been tested for radon? If so, when, what were the results, and where are the records held? If not, what is the plan to test during the coming heating season?”

Once that question is asked and minuted, the hazard is identified and the employer knows. What happens next is the whole question — and in provincially regulated workplaces, failing to act on an identified hazard is exactly what general duty provisions exist to catch.

Step 2 — Know what a proper test looks like

Employers sometimes respond with a single detector, a short-term test, or a handheld reading. None of those meet Health Canada's method for workplaces. The *Guide for Radon Measurements in Public Buildings* requires:

- **Long-term measurement — at least three months, during the heating season.** Short-term measurements are explicitly not acceptable for deciding whether action is needed.

- **A detector in every occupied room in contact with the ground** — offices, work areas, classrooms — where someone spends more than four hours a day.
- **One detector per 200 m²** in rooms larger than 200 m².
- **Quality control detectors on top** — duplicates at 10% of locations, plus blanks.
- **C-NRPP-approved devices, analysed by an accredited laboratory.**

A twelve-room ground floor needs roughly thirteen detectors, not one. If the employer reports a single number for a whole building, that is a reasonable thing to ask about.

Step 3 — Know what the numbers mean

Result	What Health Canada recommends
Below 200 Bq/m ³	No further action required. Retest after major renovation, changed ventilation, or changed room use.
200–600 Bq/m ³	Remediation within 2 years
Above 600 Bq/m ³	Remediation within 1 year

There is no level considered risk-free. Where results approach 200, Health Canada advises considering mitigation anyway.

Step 4 — Know what a proper record contains

If your employer says the building was tested, the record should contain, for each test: the **date, time and location**; the substance tested for; the **sampling and testing method**; the **result**; and the **name and occupation of the person who made the test**.

A one-page laboratory certificate with a number on it is not a complete record. Two further documents are part of it, and both concern you directly:

- the **qualified person's signed written report** from the hazard investigation, which must be kept 30 years; and
- the employer's **written procedure** for controlling the substance, which must be kept up to date and made **readily available for examination by employees**.

The regulations also require the employee training programme to cover **the qualified person's observations** from that investigation. The investigation is not an internal document.

Step 5 — If you get no answer, know the escalation route

Start with your committee. In almost every case, a question raised and minuted through the committee is what gets a building tested. Give the employer a reasonable opportunity to respond — a cooperative process produces a better result than an adversarial one.

If the question is ignored or stonewalled, there is a further route. In a federally regulated workplace, a worker is not required to raise the matter with the employer first: a complaint may be made directly to the **Labour Program** of Employment and Social Development Canada. It can prompt an inspection and can become part of the public record. In a provincially regulated workplace, the equivalent route is your provincial occupational health and safety regulator, with the general duty clause as the basis.

The order matters. Raise it through the committee, document the request and the response, and escalate only if you get nowhere.

Questions for your committee's agenda

1. Has this building been tested for radon? When, and by what method?
2. How many detectors were used, and in which rooms?

3. Was the test at least three months, during the heating season?
4. Were the detectors C-NRPP-approved and laboratory-analysed?
5. Where are the results filed, and can the committee see them — including placement locations, dates, method and who performed the test?
6. If the building has never been tested, when will detectors be placed?
7. If a previous result was above 200 Bq/m³, what was done, and was it retested afterward?
8. Does the employer's testing cover every building we occupy, including leased space?

If your employer says the portfolio is too large to test

That may be true, and there is a recognised answer for it. The Labour Program has been reported to accept that testing a large untested portfolio by the in-force date may not be realistic, and that a **phased approach** — highest-risk buildings first, with documented prioritisation and a written plan for the rest — can be a recognised path forward, provided the employer raises it with and agrees it with the regulator.

So the committee question is not “why haven't you tested everything?” It is: *which buildings are prioritised, what is the schedule, and has this been discussed with the Labour Program?* An employer with a written plan is in a very different position from one with nothing.

Why this autumn matters

The regulation contains no deadline to test. But the duty begins 30 January 2027 and is defined as an **annual average**, which requires at least 91 days of measurement during the heating season.

Counting 91 days back from 30 January 2027 lands in **early November 2026**. And detectors placed after the end of January push the test period outside the heating season, which undermines the result — so the usable deployment window runs **1 October to the end of January**.

That is not a legal deadline. It is arithmetic, and it is why the question is worth raising at your next committee meeting rather than in the new year.

About this guide. Published by **RadonTest.ca**, Canada's independent radon testing service. We supply C-NRPP-approved test kits and accredited laboratory analysis across Canada, in English and French. We do not perform radon mitigation and we earn nothing from what your result says — which is why we can write a guide like this one.

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We do not interpret health risk — Health Canada is the health authority on radon in Canada (canada.ca/radon). This guide is general information for workers and health and safety committees and **is not legal advice**.

Sources. Canada Labour Code, Part II; Canada Gazette, Part II, Vol. 160, No. 3 (SOR/2026-10); Canada Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, ss. 10.4, 10.5, 10.6, 10.14, 10.15, 10.19, 10.26; Health Canada, Guide for Radon Measurements in Public Buildings; Health Canada, Canadian radon guideline; Employment and Social Development Canada, workplace health and safety compliance; CCOHS, Radon in Buildings.