

Why a Radon System Follow-Up Test Matters for Your Home

When I first bought my house in York County, I knew radon was something to take seriously. The test during the home inspection came back elevated, so I had a mitigation system installed right away. What I did not fully understand at the time was that the system is not a set-it-and-forget-it solution. A radon system follow-up test is what tells you whether the installation actually worked and continues to work over time.

Radon is a radioactive gas that comes from the natural decay of uranium in soil. It can seep into any home through cracks in the foundation, gaps around pipes, or even through the soil itself. Once inside, it can accumulate to levels that pose a long-term health risk. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that radon causes thousands of lung cancer deaths each year, making it the second leading cause after smoking. That is why a proper radon system follow-up test is not just a box to check off after installation. It is the only way to confirm that your mitigation system is actually reducing those levels below the action threshold.



What a Radon Mitigation System Actually Does

A typical sub-slab depressurization system works by pulling radon gas from beneath the home and venting it above the roofline. A fan creates negative pressure under the slab, which keeps the gas from entering the living space. That sounds straightforward, but several things can go wrong. The fan could be undersized for the soil type or the square footage. The seal around the slab might not be complete. The vent pipe could have a leak or an obstruction. Even a well-installed system can underperform if the soil conditions are different than expected or if the home has multiple foundation sections.

I have seen cases where a homeowner assumed the system was working because they could hear the fan running. But the only real measure is a radon test taken after the system has been running for at least 24 hours, and ideally longer. That is the follow-up test. It tells you the actual radon concentration in the air you breathe. Without it, you are guessing.

The Timing of the Follow-Up Test

Most contractors recommend doing the first follow-up test within 30 days of system installation. That gives the system time to stabilize and the radon levels to settle. But the timing also matters for accuracy. Radon levels can fluctuate with weather, season, and even the time of day. A short-term test taken during a period of heavy rain or high winds might show a different reading than one taken in calm, dry weather. That is why many professionals, including the team at [York PA Radon Pros radon system follow-up test](#), advise doing a long-term test lasting 90 days to a year for the most reliable picture.



That said, a short-term test is still useful as an initial check. If the short-term result is below 2 picocuries per liter, you can feel fairly confident. If it is between 2 and 4, the EPA recommends considering a mitigation system. If it is above 4, action is strongly advised. But the follow-up test after mitigation should ideally show levels well below 2. If it does not, something needs adjustment.

Common Reasons a Follow-Up Test Shows Elevated Levels

- The fan is not operating correctly, maybe intermittently or at reduced speed.
- The suction point is not effectively drawing from the entire sub-slab area.
- There is a new entry route for radon, such as a crack that developed after installation.
- The system was installed in only one part of the house but radon is entering through another foundation section.
- The soil is unusually permeable or has a high radon flux that requires a stronger fan or additional suction points.

Each of these issues can be diagnosed and fixed, but only if you know there is a problem. That is where the follow-up test becomes the diagnostic tool. Without it, a faulty system may run for

years without ever protecting your family.

Why You Should Not Skip the Follow-Up Test

I have talked to homeowners who said they skipped the follow-up test because they trusted the installer or because the system seemed to be working. One couple in York told me they waited two years before testing, and when they finally did, the level was over 6 picocuries per liter. The fan had been running the whole time, but a small gap in the slab seal had opened up, allowing radon to bypass the system. They had been breathing elevated radon for two years without knowing it.

That kind of scenario is more common than you might think. The EPA and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection both recommend retesting every two years after the initial follow-up. But the first follow-up test is the most critical because it validates the entire investment. A proper radon system follow-up test from a qualified service like York PA Radon Pros radon system follow-up test will include both a short-term screening and a recommendation for long-term monitoring if needed.

How the Follow-Up Test Is Done

The test itself is simple. You place a small detector in the lowest livable area of the home, usually the basement or first floor. It must remain undisturbed for the test period. No opening windows, no running fans that could skew the air exchange. For a short-term test, 48 to 96 hours is typical. For a long-term test, the detector stays in place for 90 days or more. After that, you send it to a lab for analysis.

Some companies use continuous radon monitors that give hourly readings. Those are useful if you want to see how levels change with weather or occupancy. But for a standard follow-up, a charcoal canister or alpha track detector works well. The key is consistency. Use the same type of test and the same placement each time so you can compare results year to year.



What to Do If the Follow-Up Test Shows a Problem

If your follow-up test comes back above 4 picocuries per liter, do not panic. It means your system needs adjustment, not that radon is unbeatable. Start by checking the obvious things. Is the fan running? Is the manometer showing proper negative pressure? Are there any visible cracks or openings in the foundation? Sometimes the fix is as simple as sealing a new gap or replacing a faulty fan.

Other times, the system may need a redesign. A different fan size, an additional suction point, or a better seal around the slab can make a big difference. A professional can evaluate the system and recommend changes. That is why it helps to work with a company that does both

installation and follow-up testing. They can see the full picture and know what adjustments are practical.

Long-Term Monitoring vs. One-Time Test

A single follow-up test is a snapshot. Radon levels can change over time as the soil settles, as the house settles, or as new construction happens nearby. That is why the EPA recommends testing every two years after the initial follow-up. Some homeowners choose to install a continuous monitor that gives real-time readings. That is an option, but for most people, a regular testing schedule is sufficient.

If you are buying a home with an existing radon system, always ask for the follow-up test results from the last two years. If the seller cannot provide them, factor the cost of a new test into your offer. A system that was installed five years ago may not still be performing well, especially if no one has tested it since.

Practical Advice for Homeowners

Here is what I recommend based on my own experience and what I have seen from working with homeowners in York County. First, get the initial follow-up test done within a month of installation. Do not let it slide. Second, keep a record of every test result, including the date, the type of test, and the reading. That gives you a history to spot trends. Third, if you hire a professional for the test, make sure they provide a written report with the lab results and a clear explanation of what they mean.



Working with a company that specializes in radon mitigation can give you peace of mind. A service like York PA Radon Pros radon system follow-up test is designed to catch problems early and ensure your system is doing its job. They understand the local geology and the common issues in York County homes. That local knowledge matters because radon levels can vary dramatically from one neighborhood to the next.

In the end, radon mitigation is not a one-time project. It is an ongoing part of home maintenance. The follow-up test is the tool that tells you whether your system is still protecting your family. Skipping it is like never checking the smoke detector battery. You hope it works, but you do not actually know. And with radon, the stakes are too high to rely on hope.

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