



FINANCIAL PREPAREDNESS

"One of life's most painful moments comes when we must admit that we didn't do our homework, that we are not prepared." ~ Merlin Olsen

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Home Monitoring Devices

This week I'd like to share with you which devices I use to monitor various conditions in my house.

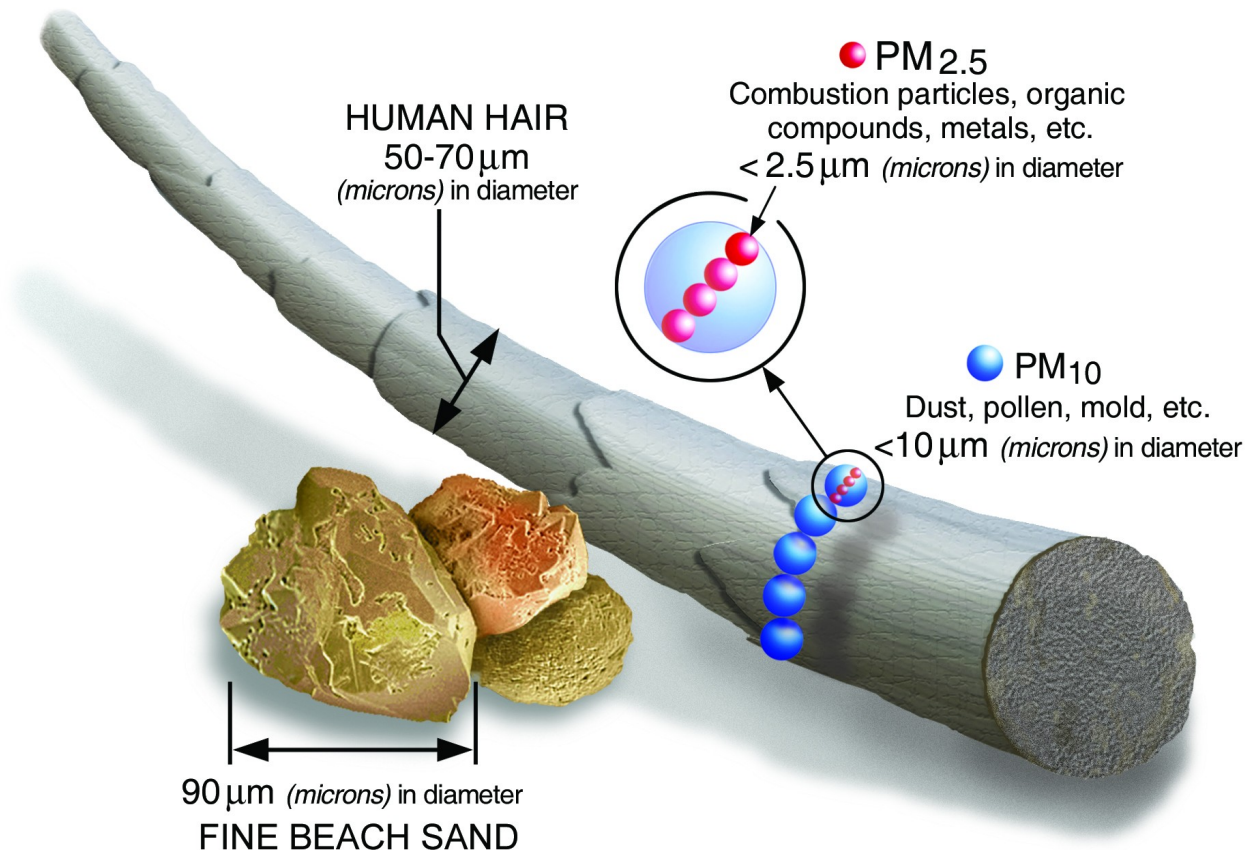
My newest addition is an [Airthings 2960 View Plus Radon & Air Quality monitor](#). It continually measures radon gas, particulate matter, carbon dioxide, volatile organic compounds (VOC), temperature, humidity and pressure.

Radon is a colorless and odorless radioactive gas that's the leading cause of lung cancer in non-smokers (the CDC and EPA estimate it causes around 21,000 U.S. lung cancer deaths every year, which is six times the number killed by home fires and carbon monoxide poisoning combined). It can enter any home through the ground without any noticeable signs.

Particulate matter is a mixture of solid particles and liquid droplets in the air. Some particles (such as dust, dirt, soot or smoke) are large or dark enough to be seen with the naked eye. Others are so small they can only be detected using an electron microscope.

Particle pollution includes PM10 (inhalable particles, with diameters of 10 micrometers or less) and PM 2.5 (fine inhalable particles, with diameters of 2.5 micrometers or less). The

Airthings 2960 provides measurements of both sizes of particles. The graphic below shows the size of these particles compared to the width of a human hair.

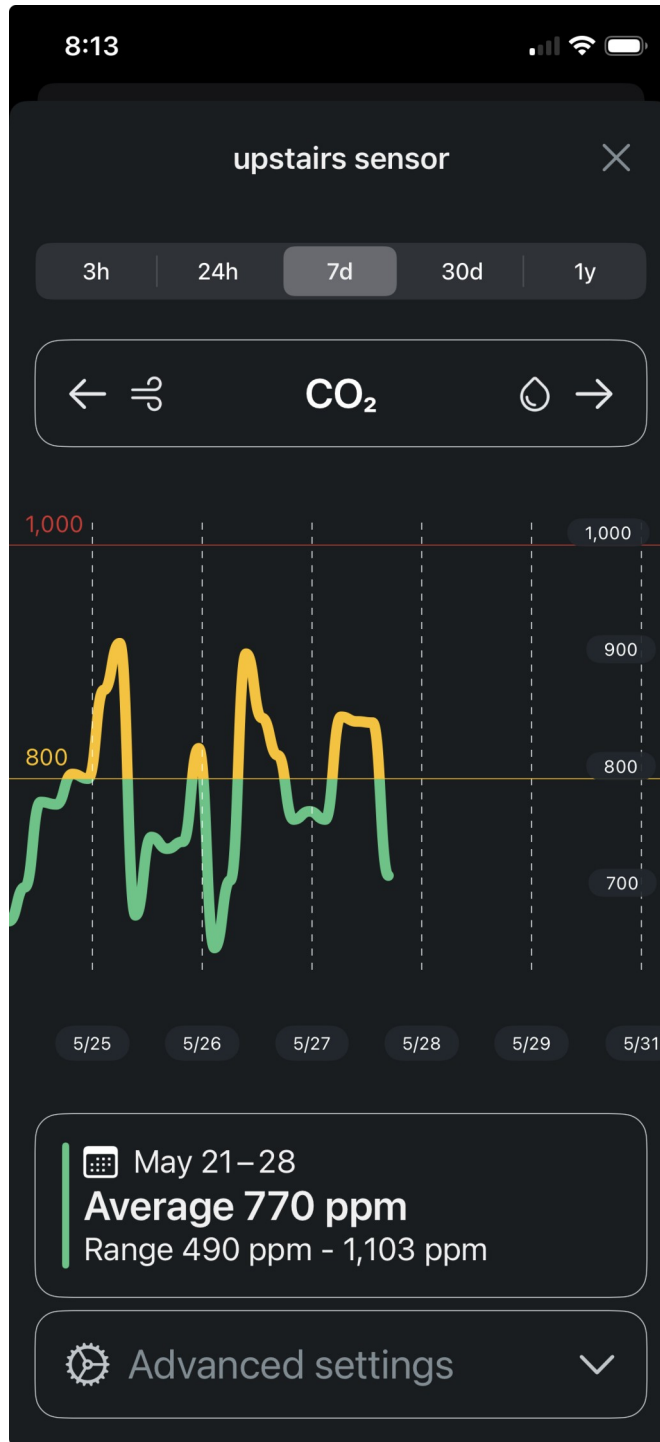


Carbon dioxide (CO₂) can cause mild fatigue and headaches, while concentrations between 1,000–2,000 ppm are linked to noticeable cognitive decline, reduced decision-making, and metabolic or cardiovascular stress. Prolonged exposure to levels exceeding 1,000 ppm may contribute to inflammation, oxidative stress and bone demineralization. Concentrations above 2,000 ppm pose a severe risk, causing significant cognitive impairment, dizziness and shortness of breath.

Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) are a large group of chemicals that are found in many products we use to build or maintain our homes. Once inside, they are released or “off-gas.” You may be able to smell some of them, but smell is not a good indicator of health risk. The risk of health effects from inhaling any chemical depends on how much is in the air, how long and how often a person breathes it in. Breathing in low levels of VOCs for long periods of time may increase some people’s risk of health problems. Several studies suggest that exposure to VOCs may make symptoms worse for people with asthma or who are particularly sensitive to chemicals.

Here are some common symptoms of exposure to high levels of VOCs. Acute/short term exposures (hours to days): eye, nose & throat irritation, headaches, nausea/vomiting, dizziness and worsening of asthma symptoms. Chronic exposures (years to a lifetime): cancer, liver and kidney damage, damage to central nervous system.

The Airthings 2960 pushes a constant stream of readings to a well-designed app that makes it easy to view and interpret trends over various periods of time. You can receive an alert if one of the readings moves into an unhealthy range. The website version of the app includes an impressive dashboard that is very customizable, which makes it easy to visualize the data (in charts) and draw insights.



For years I've said that "What you put into your body *matters.*" This device and its app have made me realize that that includes the air we breathe. It's easy to assume that air is generally healthy enough because with rare exceptions, it always *looks* clear. But as I

noted in the issue about [EMFs](#), just because you can't see, hear, smell or feel something doesn't mean it's safe.

This has prompted me to drill down into this area to learn more and take steps to ensure that the air inside my house is healthy to breathe. I read about [energy recovery ventilators](#), which draw fresh air into your house but leave the unwanted humidity and temperature outside, and am looking into getting one or two installed on my house. Since I'm completely surrounded by trees, this is a great option, but if you live in an urban area that has high air pollution, it probably wouldn't make sense for you.

Until I bought these Airthings monitors, I had been using [Govee indoor hygrometer/thermometers](#) to monitor the air inside my house. They work well, but the Airthings 2960 takes monitoring to a whole new level.

Another recent addition is [Ting](#), which helps prevent house fires by detecting hidden electrical problems behind walls, inside devices and in the power entering your home. The companion app alerts you about any hazards and provides information about local power outages. Usually nothing is happening, but it provides peace of mind, especially if you have an older house.

I use [Simplisafe](#) for my home security system, which is simple, customizable, affordable and dependable. When an event occurs that requires them to call you to ensure that everything is OK, they call immediately and the phone reps are professional. The companion app allows you to view your cameras in real time and even converse with whoever is there. You can get entry sensors, indoor and outdoor cameras, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, motion sensors, water sensors, glass break sensors and temperature sensors.

I've considered getting a [freezer monitor](#) to alert me if the temperature inside my large freezer dropped (e.g., if the door was accidentally left ajar), but I haven't pulled the trigger on that yet.

Sometimes an aircraft flies overhead that sounds or looks unusual, in which case I use the [Flightradar24 app](#) to check it out, which is interesting.

I wrote about [weather apps](#) in Issue #204.

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