

Natural Gas Key Safety Messages

Reporting Natural Gas Odors, Leaks and Emergencies

A gas leak is often recognized by smell, sight, or sound: Smell — a distinctive sulfur-like or rotten-egg odor is added to natural gas, so you'll recognize it quickly. This odor may fade or be difficult to distinguish. Do not rely on your sense of smell alone to detect a natural gas leak.

Look — You may see dirt blowing into the air from a hole in the ground; continuous bubbling in water; dead or dying vegetation (in an otherwise moist area) over or near a pipeline; a damaged connection to a gas appliance; or an exposed pipeline after an earthquake, fire, flood, or other disaster.

Listen — you may hear a hissing, whistling, or roaring sound as natural gas escapes from a pipe. If you suspect a natural gas leak, warn others and immediately leave the area. From a safe location at least 300 feet from the suspected leak, call 911 and Cobden Municipal Gas System (618-559-7406) any time, day or night.

Damage Prevention

Damage to a gas pipeline or service to a house may create an explosion resulting in injury, death, severe property damage, and loss of vital service. Help prevent damage to buried natural gas pipelines by notifying your local one-call (811) system before you dig, trench, drill, grade, excavate, or move earth in any way. This free service will arrange to have buried natural gas lines and other utilities located and marked, so you can dig safely in the area where these lines are buried.

Snow and Ice Issues

Snow and ice can damage natural gas meters and pipes and interfere with the safe operation of your natural gas appliances. Use a broom to keep natural gas service equipment clear during the winter. Chimneys and vents for natural gas appliances must be cleared following a major snow or ice storm to enable proper venting and prevent carbon monoxide accumulation.

Cross Bore Awareness

If you encounter a blockage in a sewer lateral, it could be caused by a natural gas line that was inadvertently drilled or bored through the sewer line in what is known as a "cross bore." Cutting into a cross-bored natural gas line can result in a fire or explosion. Before clearing any blocked sewer lateral, take precautions to determine whether a cross bore exists and use the least invasive equipment possible.

Flammable Ignition Awareness

Never use gasoline or other flammable liquids indoors. Always store them in an approved container, away from children.

Buried Fuel Line Inspections

All-natural gas pipes downstream of the natural gas meter (the "building" side) belong to the property owner. The property owner is responsible for maintenance and operation of this portion of the fuel line system.

Carbon Monoxide Awareness

Carbon monoxide, also known as CO, is a silent killer. Ensure that fuel burning appliances are installed, maintained, and used correctly and safely. This includes having an annual inspection of heating and venting equipment by a qualified technician prior to the heating season, and proper installation and use of a CO alarm that meets current standards.

Everyone should learn to recognize the symptoms of CO poisoning. Symptoms can occur immediately or more gradually after long-term exposure.

Common symptoms include:

- Dizziness
- Confusion
- Shortness of breath
- Nausea
- Headaches
- Fainting

If you have these symptoms after being in an enclosed area, get fresh air immediately and go to a hospital emergency department. Be sure to tell your doctor that you may have CO poisoning. Call a qualified technician to check your fuel-burning appliances.

Internal Piping and Appliance Connector Safety

Have your natural gas appliance and equipment connectors inspected regularly by a qualified professional and replaced as needed. Certain kinds of flexible connectors manufactured between 1970 and 1980 may fail over time and should be replaced immediately.

Corrugated Stainless Steel Tubing Safety

If your home or business was built after 1990, or you've had work done to the natural gas system, it is likely that corrugated stainless steel tubing (CSST) was installed. If lightning strikes a structure containing improperly installed CSST, the lightning will travel along the structure's natural gas piping and could cause a leak or fire. Consult a licensed electrician to ensure your CSST is safe.

Scalding from Excessively Hot Tap Water

Make sure your water heater is set to a safe temperature, per the manufacturer's recommendations. Always check the water temperature before placing a child in the bathtub or getting into the bath yourself. Never leave a child alone or with other young children in the bathtub.

Space Heater Safety

Natural gas space heaters are a safe way to heat, provided you use them properly, have them installed and serviced by a qualified professional, and maintain them correctly.