

NATURAL GAS

Safety Information

As with any fuel source, it is important to follow proper safety precautions when using natural gas in your home or business. Improper installation, use or maintenance of gasburning appliances, piping and venting can create dangerous conditions. This information identifies potential hazards and provides information on how to be safe around natural gas.

Appliance Connectors

Appliance connectors are corrugated metal tubes used to connect gas appliances to fuel gas supply pipes in your home or business. Some older brass connectors have a serious flaw in how their tubing was joined to their end pieces. Over time, the end pieces can separate from the tubing and cause a serious gas leak, explosion or fire. To our knowledge, these dangerous uncoated brass connectors have not been made for more than twenty (20) years, but many of them are still in use. The older these connectors get, the greater the possibility of failure.

Although not all uncoated connectors have this flaw, it is very difficult to tell which ones do. Therefore, any uncoated brass connector should be immediately with either a new plastic-coated brass or a new stainless steel connector. Connectors can wear out from too much moving, bending or corrosion. Connectors should always be replaced whenever the appliance is replaced or moved from its location.

If you believe that you have an older connector in your home, have a qualified contractor inspect the connector and replace it if necessary. Do not attempt to check connectors yourself.

Moving the appliance, even slightly, whether to clean behind it or to inspect its gas connector, can cause the complete failure of one of these older weakened connectors, possibly resulting in a deadly fire or explosion.

Be sure to follow these appliance connector safety guidelines:

- Make sure that connectors are installed where no one will step, sit, lean or place a heavy object on them.
- Never have a connector installed through a wall, floor or ceiling.
- An appliance connector should not be more than six feet (6') long.

- Each appliance should have a shut-off valve installed on the house piping before the connector.
- A new connector should be installed every time an appliance is replaced.

Gas Leaks

Gas leaks can be very dangerous, possibly resulting in a deadly fire or explosion, so be sure to know the signs of a gas leak and what to do in an emergency. There are three (3) ways in which you can detect a gas leak:

- **Smell:** Natural gas is injected with a distinct odor, which many people equate to that of rotten eggs. Contact your gas company for a scratch n' sniff card with this scent.
- **Sight:** Visible blowing dirt, bubbling water or discolored vegetation near a buried natural gas line.
- **Sound:** A hissing or blowing sound near the gas meter or gas appliances.

If you suspect that gas is leaking, follow these steps:

- 1) Exit the building or area immediately, leaving doors and windows open as you exit. Do not open windows if they are not already open. Do not use your telephone or cell phone, operate any appliance, light a match, or turn lights switches on or off.
- 2) Call your gas company from a neighboring location.
- 3) Wait at the neighboring location until the gas company determines it is safe to return.

Gas Piping

The gas company is responsible for maintaining the gas lines that deliver natural gas to the meter at your home. You are responsible for maintaining the gas lines from the meter to the natural gas-burning appliances throughout your home and property – indoors and outdoors, above and below ground. You may have gas lines extending to yard lights, grills, pool heaters, and garage or workshop heaters. Most meters are “attached” to the house or building.

If you have an older home and do not have a basement, the gas line from your meter to your pipes and appliances may be piped below the slab on which your home rests and enter through the floor.

If this is the case, it can be difficult to monitor the gas line and detect a gas leak. Have a qualified contractor inspect and, if advisable, re-route the gas line from the meter above ground to an appropriate place so that it can be easily monitored. If there is a distance of more than three feet (3') between the meter and your home, the gas company monitors only the primary pipeline for corrosion and leaks. The gas company does not monitor any fuel lines after the meter for business customers.

However, you are still responsible for repairs on these lines. Problems with your natural gas piping and appliances can be dangerous and costly. You should have all natural gas piping that is not monitored by the gas company, periodically inspected for leaks, corrosion and other potential problems. Ask a qualified contractor to perform this inspection during the annual inspection of your gas appliances.

Gas Appliances, Heating Systems and Venting

Many potential hazards can be identified and repaired only by a qualified contractor. Have a qualified contractor make an annual inspection of all of your gas piping, gas appliances, heating systems and venting.

The following signs are indicators that a dangerous condition may exist in your gas appliances and/or venting. If you see any of the following, call a qualified contractor immediately to perform an inspection and make all necessary repairs:

- Gas flames that are pale yellow or wavy.
- Gas appliances that are not vented to the outdoors.
- Rust, corrosion or excessive dust on gas appliances.
- Excessively dirty, clogged or missing furnace air filters.
- Gas appliances valves that are missing or not properly installed.
- Blocked, broken, rusted, disconnected, corroded or unsealed appliance vent piping.
- Soot near burners or appliance venting.
- Venting not approved by the appliance manufacturer or not venting to the proper place outdoors.
- Evidence of discoloration of the appliance burner, burner access door or vent area.
- Gas appliances installed in a garage less than eighteen inches (18") above the garage floor.
- Gas appliances that are missing a fire door.

Carbon Monoxide

Carbon monoxide (C/O) is odorless, colorless and tasteless. It is produced when any fossil fuel, including natural gas, is burned. When fossil fuels do not burn properly, C/O can build up and cause sickness – even death. C/O can build up when gas appliances are used improperly or are not vented properly.

Safety Measures:

- Never heat your home or apartment with you gas range or oven.
- Have your gas appliances and heating systems inspected annually by a qualified contractor.

- Install carbon monoxide detectors in your home. Follow the manufacturer's installation and use guidelines.

Symptoms of C/O Poisoning:

- Dizziness, nausea, headache and coughing.
- Irregular heartbeat.
- Pale skin with cherry red lips and ear tips.

If You Suspect C/O Poisoning:

- Get fresh air and stay outside.
- Call 911 or the local fire department.

Gas Meters

It is important that the gas company has full access to your meter, and that you keep it clear of obstructions that can damage your meter or prevent the gas company from reading it. A damaged meter can lead to a dangerous gas leak. If you believe your meter has been damaged, contact your gas company immediately.

Do Not Move Meters and Regulators:

If your gas meter needs to be moved, call your gas company to have a qualified service representative perform the work. Moving or tampering with a meter or regulator can cause a hazardous gas leak. A limited number of regulators in the gas company system contain mercury. Improper handling or removal of such regulators can cause hazardous mercury spills.

Only a gas company representative is authorized to move your gas meter or regulator. Do not attempt to move or tamper with your gas meter, regulator or any associated piping or permit anyone else to do the same.

Snow and Ice:

Snow or ice buildup covering the outside venting of a furnace, water heater or clothes dryer can cause a hazardous buildup of carbon monoxide. The regulator on your gas meter has to be able to release gas in the event of a malfunction. If ice or snow covers the vent, the regulator may not work properly and could cause a dangerous pressure buildup in the gas lines in your home. Additionally, snow removal that damages or dislodges your gas meter can cause a dangerous gas leak.

To Prevent Problems, Follow These Tips:

- Use a broom (not a shovel) to clear snow from your meter, regulator and vents.
- Remove icicles hanging above your meter.

- Sweep snow away from the outside openings of natural gas appliances (such as clothes dryers).
- Be sure whoever removes snow from your property is aware of the placement of your meter if it is near a sidewalk or driveway.
- If your meter becomes encased in ice, call the gas company.

Mulch Near Meters:

Do not place mulch around the meter. It is combustible and can cause a fire that could ignite natural gas that flows into and throughout your meter.

Other Obstructions:

If your meter and/or regulator is located where other objects could possibly collide with or damage the meter and/or regulator, you must install physical protection (such as a guardrail or steel post).

Water Heaters

Be sure that your water heater is set at a temperature recommended by the manufacturer. Have your hot water heater checked by a qualified contractor at least annually for proper installation and operation.

Be sure that the TP discharge tube ends at least twelve inches (12") from the floor. The TP valve discharge tube should not have threads at the end farthest from the TP valve.