

# WHAT WE ALL NEED TO KNOW ABOUT GAS SAFETY

**Did you know?**  
Natural gas is really a mixture of gases that formed from the decayed remains of ancient plants and animals buried deep in the earth. The main ingredient in natural gas is methane.

對於燃氣安全信息  
[www.cityofpaloalto.org/GasSafetyMandarin](http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/GasSafetyMandarin)  
Para obtener más información de seguridad de gas, visite  
[www.cityofpaloalto.org/GasSafetySpanish](http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/GasSafetySpanish)



**24 HOUR CALL LINE**  
**(650) 329-2579**

**SUSPECT A GAS LEAK?**  
**CALL 911!**

## What is a gas EMERGENCY

- A **leaking** pipeline
- A **weakened or damaged** pipeline
- **Fire or explosion** near or directly involving a pipeline
- **Natural disaster** affecting a pipeline such as earthquake, flood or soil erosion



**CALL 911**  
**IN AN EMERGENCY**

## Identifying GAS LEAKS

**HOW TO IDENTIFY A GAS PIPELINE** Above ground pipeline markers at street crossings, highways, railroads and fences indicate natural gas pipelines are buried underground. Emergency phone numbers are posted on the markers and should be used if a gas leak is detected or emergency situation occurs.

### HOW TO RECOGNIZE A PIPELINE LEAK



**SMELL**  
Mercaptan, a sulfur chemical, is added to natural gas to make it smell similar to rotten eggs. The smell of mercaptan helps you detect even the smallest amount of natural gas in the air.  
**24 Hour Call Line (650) 329-2579**



**SIGHT**  
Fire near pipeline • Unusual dirt or dust blowing  
• Pool of liquid on the ground possibly bubbling  
• Persistent bubbles in standing water  
• Discolored vegetation  
**Call 911!**



**SOUND**  
Explosion near pipeline • Hissing or roaring sound  
**Call 911!**



## Staying SAFE

The City is committed to safely operating its underground natural gas distribution system comprised of approximately 211 miles of distribution piping, 17,500 customer gas service lines and 23,600 gas meters.

**Did you know?**  
Natural gas is colorless and odorless. Utility companies add mercaptan that smells like rotten eggs to help make gas leaks easier to notice.

### IMPORTANT CONTACT NUMBERS

Emergencies: **911**  
Leaks (24 hour): **(650) 329-2579**  
Before clearing sewers: **(650) 496-6995**  
Before Digging: **811**  
Underground Service Alert (USA)

### GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT PIPELINE SAFETY

Call City of Palo Alto Water-Gas-Wastewater Operations at: **(650) 496-6982**  
[www.cityofpaloalto.org/safeutility](http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/safeutility)  
[www.usanorth.org](http://www.usanorth.org)

## Know WHAT TO DO

**IF YOU DETECT A GAS LEAK OR HIT A PIPELINE WHILE DIGGING:**



**Leave** the area immediately and call from elsewhere.

**Call 911** or the City of Palo Alto 24 hour emergency number at **(650) 329-2579**.



**Do not turn** any lights, appliances, phones or equipment on or off.

**Do not strike** a match.

**Do not look** for a gas leak.

### OUR RESPONSIBILITY

The City owns, and is responsible for, the gas line on your property connecting the City main to your home gas meter. We maintain the natural gas distribution system in accordance with prescribed federal safety standards.

All Utility Meters and Valves Are City Property. Authorized utility workers can turn on and off City meters and valves on your property. **Do not turn off your gas meter unless it is an emergency**—if you smell gas inside or outside the home. **If you can visibly see gas blowing, leave the area immediately and call 911!**

Once a gas meter is turned off, it is NEVER safe to turn the valves back on yourself; safety and pressure checks are required before restoring service. Call the City of Palo Alto 24 hours a day at (650) 329-2579.

## Your RESPONSIBILITY

**PROPERTY OWNERS ARE RESPONSIBLE** for safely maintaining gas lines from the gas meter to their home, yard, pool, hot tub, second unit, appliances, cottage, workshop or any other location on their property. It is the owner's responsibility to maintain the piping to avoid corrosion and/or leakage.

To ensure safe, reliable operation, buried piping should be inspected periodically for corrosion and leaks. You (or the building owner) are advised to contact a licensed plumber or heating contractor to locate and inspect your buried gas piping. If an unsafe condition is discovered, repairs should be made as soon as possible.

You are **NOT** allowed to store objects above gas meters; they may fall and damage the meters. Also, do not block the meter by planting trees, shrubs or other plants near it.



Installing landscaping? Expanding buildings?

# CALL BEFORE YOU DIG

## MAKE SURE IT IS SAFE BEFORE YOU:

- Plant a tree • Stake a sapling tree • Dig a trench
- Build or repair a fence or deck • Pour a building foundation
- Replace a driveway or walkway • Dig up sprinklers
- Remove a parking median • Any time you dig around utility lines!

## CALL BEFORE YOU DIG—AVOID COSTLY ACCIDENTS AND DANGEROUS CONDITIONS

Call Underground Service Alert (USA) at 811 or (800) 227-2600 a minimum of 48 hours prior to any excavation. **USA is a free service.** Visit [www.usanorth.org](http://www.usanorth.org) for more information.

It is your responsibility to call USA before digging begins. Failure to call this number can result in liability for any damage or loss of property.

- 1** Properly mark your excavation area
- 2** Call USA and provide a detailed description of where and when you plan to dig.
- 3** USA will then locate and mark all underground natural gas pipelines and other utilities prior to your excavation work.

## WHEN YOU DIG:

**Excavate by Hand** (within two feet horizontally) near buried gas pipelines, locate piping in advance and dig by hand to avoid damaging gas lines.

**Dig with Care.** In the event that a natural gas pipeline is disturbed, move away from the escaping gas, immediately call **911** and notify the City of Palo Alto at **(650) 329-2579**. The City will dispatch crews to fix the leak and make the area safe.

Call Underground Service Alert (USA) at 811.

# At HOME

## KEEP GAS APPLIANCES WELL TUNED AND OPERATING SAFELY (E.G. FURNACE, BOILER, WATER HEATER, CLOTHES DRYER, BARBEQUE GRILL, STOVE, OVEN)



**Pilot lights** and burners have a steady, blue flame when operating correctly. (Decorative gas fire log flames are the only exception; they may be either blue or yellow.)



**Inspect all** gas appliances, furnaces, vents, flues, chimneys and gas lines every year or two using qualified industry professionals.



**Keep the area** around appliances/equipment clean and unblocked to allow proper air flow.



**Avoid fires** and explosions—keep flammables and combustibles away from gas appliances (e.g. paper, mops, brooms, laundry, lighter fluid, gasoline, solvents, oil based paint, etc.).



**Keep at least** one multipurpose fire extinguisher handy.



## NEED TO CLEAR A SEWER LINE? CALL US FIRST (650) 496-6995

On rare occasions, natural gas pipelines have been found within sewer lines. When there is a sewer blockage, equipment used to unplug the sewer line can penetrate the gas pipe, causing a gas release. **Please call (650) 496-6995 BEFORE your sewer pipe is cleared or rooted out.** At no cost to you, we will come out promptly to verify a natural gas pipeline is not near your sewer line. If you fail to call us prior to cleaning out your sewer line and you or your plumber sense or see an obstruction, be sure to call us immediately so we can verify that a natural gas pipeline has not been damaged. Of course, **if you believe you've penetrated a gas line—or any time you smell gas—leave the area immediately and call 911.**

## ALERT: CARBON MONOXIDE IS ODORLESS YET HARMFUL

Carbon monoxide detection alarms are required in all single-family residences with gas heating, appliances, fireplace and/or attached garage.



Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless, tasteless gas produced during the incomplete combustion of fuels such as gasoline, coal, wood, charcoal, kerosene, propane, heating oil and natural gas. If the normally blue furnace flame turns yellow, your furnace may be producing carbon monoxide. Inhaled, this gas prevents the blood from absorbing oxygen, causing illness and even death. Warning sign severity depends on the amount of exposure, but signs include headache, nausea, fatigue, blurry vision and flu-like symptoms that disappear or lessen when you leave the building.

### Other signs of carbon monoxide presence:

- Unusually high indoor humidity
- Persistent heavy condensation on walls & windows
- Stuffy or stale indoor air
- Soot or water collecting near a burner or vent
- Your carbon monoxide alarm is sounding

### Suspect carbon monoxide in your home?

Immediately open windows to ventilate the area, then leave the room. If you experience physical symptoms, get everyone out of the house and call a doctor. **Call 911** or the City of Palo Alto at **(650) 329-2579** to find the source of the carbon monoxide. Do not return until the condition is corrected.

# SPECIAL MESSAGES

## FOR RESIDENTS OR BUSINESSES NEAR MARKERS

The Utility's main gas pipelines are buried underground and their approximate location is usually indicated by markers along the route where the pipe intersects a street, highway or railway. If you smell, see or hear a leak, leave the area, then call 911 or the pipeline operator listed on the marker.

## FOR PUBLIC OFFICIAL OR EMERGENCY FIRST RESPONDERS:

In the event of an emergency on a Palo Alto gas pipeline, **call 911 or emergency dispatchers at (650) 329-2579** so the City can send utility and emergency crews to the site to shut off the gas and begin necessary repairs.

- 1** If a leak is detected, secure the area around the leak with barricades and control access. Prohibit smoking and direct traffic away from the area.
- 2** Assess whether to evacuate homes, businesses, schools and other facilities.
- 3** If the leaking gas has caught fire, try to prevent the spread of fire, but do not attempt to extinguish it, as there is a chance of secondary flames and unexpected re-ignition.

## FOR CONTRACTORS, EXCAVATORS, LANDSCAPERS

**Unintended dig-ins are the leading cause of serious and costly pipeline accidents.**

Call USA at 811 at least 48 hours before you dig. Properly mark your excavation area in the field and wait for your work site to be marked before excavating. Once the underground utilities are marked, dig with care. Note that you are responsible to pay for any damages your crew causes. **If you hit a pipeline, even if you do not see visible damage, call 911 immediately** before proceeding. Even a minor gouge, dent, scrape or crease can lead to a serious hazard.

Individuals with disabilities who require accommodations to access City facilities, services or programs, or who would like information on the City's compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, may contact the City's ADA Coordinator at (650) 329-2368 (voice) or email [ada@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:ada@cityofpaloalto.org)

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