

Gas Safety Information for Homes with Slab Foundations



CITY OF PALO ALTO
UTILITIES

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Does your home have a concrete slab foundation with gas lines running beneath the slab? If so, here are some answers to gas safety questions you may have.

Why should I be concerned about gas leaks?

Gas lines running under a slab foundation to your furnace, water heater, boiler, clothes dryer or gas range can be corroded by the soil that surrounds them and start leaking. These leaks release flammable gas into the soil and air under your home and if undetected can be harmful to you or cause an explosion or fire. While not a frequent occurrence, you should be aware of the possibility and be proactive in maintaining your gas lines and handling leaks. For more detailed gas safety information, you can go to www.cityofpaloalto.org/GasSafety or call (650) 329-2241 to be mailed a brochure.

How do I know if I have a leak problem?

Your nose knows! The best indicator of a gas leak is the smell. Natural gas is odorless, so our gas supplier has added a sulfur chemical—ethyl mercaptan---to make the gas smell similar to a rotten egg or skunk, which helps you detect even the smallest amount of leaking gas. You may also hear a hissing or roaring sound through the floor above the pipes or notice dead or dying vegetation adjacent to exterior walls. Of course, any unexplained fire or explosion should be considered a possible sign of a gas leak.

What should I do if I suspect there is a leak?

If you think you smell gas, leave your home immediately! Do not try to identify the leak on your own. From a neighbor's house or cellphone, **call 911 or the City of Palo Alto's Gas Leak emergency line at (650) 329-2579**, and the Utilities Department will come out to investigate---anytime, day or night. If a leak is found in an appliance, Utilities staff will shut off and red tag the gas line serving that appliance. If the leak is in the gas line inside the walls or floor, staff will red tag the gas line and disconnect the gas service until repairs have been made.

I don't smell gas but I'd still like my gas pipes checked. Who can do that?

A licensed plumber can conduct pressure tests for you and can replace gas lines if needed. The testing is a fairly simple procedure involving disconnecting each gas appliance from its line, disconnecting the gas meter from the gas line serving the house, and then pressure testing your gas lines per City Building Department requirements. If everything passes the pressure test, the appliances would be reconnected and pilots relit. If the pressure test fails, the plumber would have to determine where the leak(s) is, get required permit(s) and fix it before gas service could be turned back on. You should contact several plumbers to get estimates based on your unique situation.

Who is responsible for fixing leaks in my gas pipes?

You are responsible for maintenance and repairing leaks on the gas lines that run from your gas meter to your home, yard, pool, hot tub, cottage or any other location on your property. The City of Palo Alto is responsible for maintaining the pipeline leading from the City gas main to your home gas meter. *Please be aware that you will need a Building Permit for gas line repairs/changes and then must call for an inspection afterwards.* Once the inspector has verified the installation is safe, your gas can be turned back on. Visit the City Building Department at www.cityofpaloalto.org/building for information on permits required for pipeline replacement or call (650) 329-2496 if you have permit questions.