

About Natural Gas

The facts

- Natural gas serves nearly 71.9 million homes; 5.8 million businesses such as hotels, restaurants, hospitals, schools and supermarkets; 182,000 factories; and 1,800 electric generating units. On a daily basis, the average U.S. home uses 196 cubic feet of natural gas.
- Natural gas comprises almost one-fourth of all primary energy used in the United States and is directly linked to jobs and economic health. The natural gas industry supports the employment of nearly 4.1 million Americans in all 50 states.
- Fertilizer used to grow crops is composed almost entirely of natural gas components, so U.S. agricultural producers rely on an affordable, stable supply of natural gas.
- Natural gas utilities do not earn a profit on the natural gas they deliver. They earn their revenues from the service and delivery fees they charge customers to transport the natural gas to them. This fee is linked directly to the volume of natural gas consumed, rather than the price of natural gas being delivered.

(Source: American Gas Association)

Natural gas is safe, reliable and affordable

Natural gas should be handled properly and with care. Consumers should be educated about the properties of natural gas and of the potential hazards if natural gas is released through damaged or leaking pipelines.

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Properties of natural gas:

- Natural gas is **colorless**
  - There is no way to see natural gas being released. However, you may see blowing dirt, dead plants and/or bubbling water.
- Natural gas is **odorless**
  - As a safety feature, we add a compound called mercaptan to natural gas. Mercaptan gives natural gas its rotten egg smell, making it easily recognizable.
- Natural gas is **nontoxic**
  - Natural gas is not toxic to humans; however, it will displace oxygen. This means that a natural gas leak in a confined environment could significantly reduce the amount of oxygen in the air and create a dangerous environment.
- Natural gas is **flammable**
  - Natural gas will ignite with the proper mixture of air and an ignition source.

How to recognize a natural gas leak

Natural gas leaks can happen anywhere, and they can be handled quickly and easily if you know the signs. Here's how you can identify a natural gas leak:

- **SMELL**
  - Natural gas smells like rotten eggs.
- **LOOK**
  - Natural gas leaks often cause bubbling water, blowing dirt or dead plants. You may also see sink holes and/or exposed pipe.
- **LISTEN**
  - Natural gas leaks often cause a hissing sound near a natural gas line or meter.

If you smell natural gas or suspect a leak

- Leave the area immediately.
- After leaving the area, call Piedmont Natural Gas at **800.752.7504**, or call **911**.
  - Call from a neighbor's house or from another location far from the smell of natural gas.
- DO NOT use anything electrical that may create a spark; this includes cellphones.
- DO NOT operate any light switches.
- DO NOT light a match.
- DO NOT attempt to locate the source of a leak.
- DO NOT attempt to stop a leak.
- DO NOT return to the area until Piedmont Natural Gas or the emergency services have declared the area safe.
- DO NOT attempt to operate pipeline valves yourself. You may inadvertently cause more danger or additional damage.
- DO NOT attempt to extinguish a natural gas fire.

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