

Washington Gas **Safety Fact Sheet for the Public**

If you suspect a natural gas leak or other gas emergency and are unsure of its severity or what to do, evacuate the area immediately and call 911 from a safe location.

General Information

Natural gas provides one-fourth of the nation's energy for heating, cooking, manufacturing and many other uses. Washington Gas delivers natural gas to more than one million customers in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, and beyond, including Frederick County, Maryland, and a large part of the Shenandoah Valley, Virginia region.

Commitment to Safety

Nothing is more important to Washington Gas than providing safe and reliable natural gas service. The company monitors and inspects its pipeline system at regular intervals and responds around the clock to natural gas emergencies. To help ensure the highest level of public safety, Washington Gas provides year-round safety education and information to the public and natural gas safety training to first responders, other emergency officials, and excavators and contractors.

We want to keep you informed about pipeline safety and what to do in the event of a natural gas emergency. Please take time to review and discuss the information below with your family, and share what you've learned with friends and neighbors.

Pipeline Safety

The company operates a relatively small segment of **transmission pipeline** – approximately 200 miles -- and thousands of miles of **distribution pipelines**. Typically transmission pipelines carry natural gas at higher pressures from the company's "gate stations," where gas enters its pipeline system, to the "regulator station," where the pressure is reduced for distribution to customers. Pipeline markers indicate the presence -- but not the exact location or depth -- of transmission pipelines in underground rights-of-way. The markers identify the fuel, operator, and phone numbers to call *before* digging or excavating. (See photos below.) Less than half of the company's transmission lines are in High Consequence Areas (HCAs), locations specifically defined in regulations as areas where pipeline releases could have greater consequences to health, safety or the environment.

Distribution pipelines deliver natural gas directly to customers and, as with transmission pipelines, can cause serious injury if they are damaged. Although the majority of buried distribution pipelines are generally not marked above ground, you can help prevent damage to them.

Pipeline Damage Prevention - Call 811 Before You Dig

Digging-related damage is a major cause of pipeline accidents. To ensure the location and marking of underground utilities and to avoid unnecessary damage and injury, all individuals, including homeowners and construction companies alike, are required to notify their pipeline damage prevention one-call center – now made easy by dialing **811** -- when any kind of work that involves moving earth and altering the ground's surface is planned. This includes general digging, landscaping, home improvements and/or major construction, excavation or demolition. Give **at least two full business days' notice** (excluding weekends and holidays) prior to the scheduled start of the project, and please don't begin digging until lines are marked. If there is no evidence of markings -- high visibility safety paint and/or flags – check back with your one-call center to ensure no utilities were found.

What to Do If You Smell Natural Gas

Natural gas is non-toxic, colorless, and odorless and is a combustible fuel. For detection and safety, natural gas delivered through Washington Gas's distribution system has been odorized with an unpleasant odorant known as mercaptan. (Gas traveling through a very small portion of our transmission pipeline is not odorized, and additional information about visible signs of a possible leak are provided below.) Call **202-624-6092** for a free odorant sample brochure. Government, schools, businesses, property managers and others are welcome to request multiple copies for public education and awareness purposes.

If you suspect a natural gas leak or other gas emergency and are unsure of its severity or what to do, evacuate the area immediately and call 911 from a safe location.

- If you smell natural gas, ***do not attempt to locate the source of the odor***. Call the **Washington Gas Emergency Leak Line** at **703-750-1400** or **1-800-752-7520** outside the local calling area. Frederick County, Maryland, customers should call **301-662-2151**. Customers in the Shenandoah Valley area of Virginia should call **540-869-1111** or **1-800-566-7436**.
- If the odor is very strong or you hear a blowing or hissing noise, vacate the building or area *immediately*, leaving doors unlocked as you go. Abandon all motorized equipment. Do nothing that could create an ignition source — do not light a match or use any type of phone or battery-powered equipment. Do not turn electrical equipment or light switches on or off. Do not start a car or any type of motorized equipment. Call **911** and the appropriate Washington Gas emergency numbers as noted above only *after* you have reached a safe distance away from the building or area.

Follow the same precautions if you are outside and smell gas; hear hissing, blowing, or roaring noises; or see any of the following: dirt being thrown into the air; fire coming from the ground or appearing to burn above the ground; water bubbling or being blown into the air at a pond, creek or river; or if you see a dry spot in a moist field or dead or dying vegetation on or near a pipeline right-of-way.

Natural gas is distributed through a network of underground pipes and service lines. If a leak should occur, it is possible for gas to migrate into buildings, including those without natural gas service.

Washington Gas Responds

Washington Gas responds around the clock to natural gas leaks and other emergencies. If a leak poses an immediate threat, the company takes quick action to make the area safe. Corrective action is scheduled for a later date if there is no immediate threat. This prioritization process helps to ensure the safety of customers while allocating resources efficiently, coordinating with customers' schedules, and minimizing traffic disruptions.

Additional Contact Information

Corporate Headquarters:

101 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20080

Web site: www.washingtongas.com

Customer service and contact information: 703-750-1000; email: www.washingtongas.com, click on *Contact Us*; **written correspondence:** Customer Care, 6801 Industrial Road, Springfield, VA 22151.

Additional transmission pipeline information:

National Pipeline Mapping System: www.npms.phmsa.dot.gov. **Washington Gas's Pipeline Integrity Management Plan:** www.washingtongas.com, highlight *Corporate* at the home page and click on *Gas Transmission Pipeline Integrity Management Program*.

Examples of transmission pipeline markers:

