



Understanding Natural Gas

Natural gas is an odorless, colorless gas that we use to heat our homes and businesses and power our appliances. To keep you safe, MGE adds a distinctive odor to the gas we deliver to your home. This odor, similar to rotten eggs or sulfur, helps you detect a gas leak that might occur in your home, business or neighborhood. Since gas is flammable, a flame or spark near a leak could cause a fire or explosion.

Know the signs of a gas leak

In addition to the smell, other warning signs of a gas leak include:

- A hissing sound near a gas appliance, pipeline or meter.
- Unexplained dead vegetation.
- A white cloud, mist, fog or bubbles in standing water.

Be aware of pipeline markers

Underground natural gas pipelines run along public and private property, serving our homes, businesses and public places. Pipeline markers are sometimes displayed to indicate the approximate location of underground gas pipes. These markers may also note the material transported in the line, the name of the pipeline operator and a phone number in case of emergency.



Keep meters and vents clear

Snow, ice, vegetation and other materials can block or damage gas meters and exhaust vents for appliances. This can cause gas to leak, appliances to shut down or carbon monoxide (CO) to build up. Be sure to check your meters and vents regularly for blockage. Keep materials and bushes clear of metering equipment year-round to allow access and proper operation of equipment. In the event of heavy snow or ice buildup, use your hands instead of a shovel to clear the area safely.

Dig smart

To protect gas pipelines and other buried lines from accidental damage, you are required to contact Diggers Hotline a minimum of three business days before digging. Diggers Hotline will notify



underground facilities owners to mark underground facilities, free of charge, so you know where it is safe to dig. Accidental damage to gas pipelines can cause leaks or failures, which could result in a potentially hazardous situation. Call 811 or visit diggershotline.com.

Take precautions when clearing sewer line blockage

Occasionally, a gas line may be inadvertently installed through a sewer line. This intersection, known as a cross bore, could

result in a sewer backup. Clearing a cross bore may puncture the utility line and result in a catastrophic explosion or electrocution.

Always take safety precautions before clearing a sewer backup:

- Call Diggers Hotline (811) to identify the location of sewer facilities and look for a conflict.
- Check to see if there were any recent installations or upgrades to utility lines.
- Be aware of any unusual conditions, such as hissing noises, natural gas odor, blowing dirt or bubbling water.

If you suspect a cross bore, DO NOT attempt to unclog the sewer pipe. Call MGE's emergency response line at (608) 252-1111. Get more safety information at mge.com/crossbore.



If you smell gas, leave the area immediately and call MGE from a safe distance.

(608) 252-1111

Do NOT light a match or touch anything electrical such as a cell phone, lights, appliances, etc.

MGE continually invests in pipeline integrity programs and maintenance that allow for the safe and secure delivery of natural gas. Learn more at mge.com/pipelinesafety.

Your natural gas piping

While MGE owns and maintains the natural gas piping from the street to your meter, you are responsible for maintaining any natural gas lines from the meter to the point of use. It is recommended that you have a qualified technician periodically inspect buried metal pipes, since they can deteriorate with age and cause a potentially dangerous situation.

If gas appliances are disconnected, a qualified technician should always remove connectors and plug and cap the fuel line. Exposed gas pipes should never be used for other purposes such as hanging clothes.

Check out these reminders, and learn more at mge.com/customergaspipes.

Inspect gas appliances

Natural gas appliances should be inspected regularly to ensure they are operating safely and efficiently. If a gas appliance malfunctions, is blocked or is not vented properly, it can cause CO poisoning as well as other dangerous situations.

Inspect connectors inside your home

The corrugated stainless steel tubes used to attach gas appliances, like ranges and clothes dryers, to your home's natural gas supply pipes should be inspected regularly by a qualified technician and replaced as needed.

Know the signs of CO poisoning

CO is a clear, odorless gas. At high levels, it can kill a person in minutes. CO can be produced by malfunctioning gas appliances or from idling cars, lawn mowers, snow blowers, generators and grills.

Symptoms of CO poisoning are similar to those caused by the flu and other illnesses: headache, dizziness, nausea, confusion, shortness of breath or fainting. If you suspect CO poisoning, get fresh air immediately and call 911.

To help prevent CO poisoning:

- Have appliances and venting equipment checked each year.
- Install CO detectors on each level of your home and near bedrooms.
- Familiarize yourself with the operating instructions of your specific CO detector including the alert codes and replacement recommendations.

Keep flammable materials away from gas appliances

It's dangerous to store flammable materials near gas appliances. Keep gasoline, paint, solvent, adhesives, cleaning products and other flammable liquids away from gas appliances or other ignition sources. These liquids produce fumes that will ignite if they come in contact with a flame or spark from any source.

Use space heaters safely

If you use a gas space heater in your home, make sure you have the heater and venting system installed and inspected by a qualified technician. Unvented space heaters should never be used indoors, and your gas oven should not be used for heating your home. Always follow the manufacturer's operating guidelines.

Check your hot water temperature

For safety and efficiency, set the temperature of your water heater between 120°-125°F. It's a good idea to use a thermometer to measure the temperature at the faucet. Anti-scald valves, which limit water temperature, are available at local hardware stores.



In response to COVID-19, MGE continues to follow state and local guidelines as well as recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) while working throughout our community. Learn more at mge.com/commitment.