



**MICHIGAN
GAS UTILITIES™**

Educational Guide To Natural Gas

Natural gas is a clean-burning, low-cost source of energy used to heat homes, generate electricity and power factories all over our country. Much of America's natural gas comes from the south, southwest, and Canada, all transported by a network of underground pipelines. Natural gas is also stored in rock formations and piped to other locations when needed. Because the pipelines are out of sight, we want to tell you about some important safety tips that could save your life.

Facts About Natural Gas

Natural gas is almost 40 percent lighter than air, so it rises and quickly spreads out in open areas. In an enclosed room or building, natural gas first displaces air at ceiling level, and then it moves down towards the floor.

Natural gas is not toxic. However, large concentrations of natural gas will displace air in enclosed spaces and suffocation can occur. Natural gas cannot burn by itself. For it to burn, natural gas must be mixed with a precise amount of air. It must have an ignition source, such as a pilot light, a lighted match or an electric arc from a light switch, motor, doorbell or telephone.

If natural gas does ignite, let it burn. Do not attempt to put out the flame until the source of gas is eliminated. Natural gas is not liquefied petroleum gas (LPG). LPGs, such as propane, are different from natural gas because they are heavier than air and collect in low places.

What To Do If You Smell Natural Gas

It's important to be alert for the distinctively unpleasant odor of natural gas. If you detect a natural gas odor, don't look for the source of the gas leak. Get out immediately! Do not light a match, do not turn lights or appliances on or off and do not use the telephone. Instead, go to a neighbor's house and call Michigan Gas Utilities' emergency line: **800-401-6451** (we will respond promptly at no charge).

Signs Of A Natural Gas Leak Include:

- Unexplained areas of dead vegetation where the surrounding area is green
- A meter dial that continues to move after all natural gas appliances and equipment have been shut off
- Distinct natural gas odor similar to rotten eggs
- Blowing sound or bubbling in a wet or flooded area

Gas And Pipeline Permanent Markers

Gas and pipeline transmission companies use the following types of permanent markers to indicate the presence of gas lines in the area. These markers usually are not set over the pipeline but are used to indicate gas pipelines are in the area.



flexible
fiberglass
line marker

marker for
pipeline
patrol plane

pipeline
casing
vent

test
station

How Do You Locate Buried Piping?

Before starting any project that involves digging, the buried gas piping must be located in advance. Call **811** and ask to have the pipeline and all other facilities located; this service is free. Allow three full working days for utility companies to respond and locate all facilities in the area.

The paint and/or flag markings put on the ground by the gas utility company may be relied on to give the approximate location of the facilities. Remember, hand exposure of all facilities is required. Never assume that your equipment won't hit the facilities because you think they are located at a greater depth.

Questions? Call **800-401-6402**.