

## Precautions Around Gas Meters

- Do not scratch or damage the protective coating (paint) on the meter and piping.
- Do not bury any portion of the meter or its shutoff valve under dirt or mulch.
- The owner is responsible for the maintenance of any piping on the house side of the natural gas meter.
- Do not hang things or anchor laundry lines or plant supports to the gas meter or piping.
- Do not chain a pet, bicycle, gas grill or anything else to the gas meter or piping.
- Maintain a safe clearance between your outdoor grill and the gas meter.
- Maintain a two-foot clearance to allow access to the meter and meter shut-off valve.
- Call DPU for help with meter protection if the meter is located in an area where a car could strike it.

## Inclement Weather Precautions

In the event of a flood:

- Shut off the natural gas supply valve to the appliance.
- If you are evacuating the premises, shut off your natural gas valve at the meter. Use a wrench to turn the valve a quarter turn so that it is crosswise (perpendicular) to the pipe.
- If you turn off the gas at the meter, *do not* turn it back on yourself. Call City of Richmond DPU to restore the gas service.

## Snow and Ice Precautions

Use a broom, not a shovel, to keep your gas meter and regulator free from snow and ice.

For sidewall vented appliances such as direct vent furnaces, fireplaces or hot water heaters, do not allow the outside vent to be blocked by snow and ice. Blocked vents can cause carbon monoxide to back up into the building.



## Hot Water Heater Precautions

Set your hot water heater to *at least* 120 degrees Fahrenheit to ensure that harmful bacteria will not form inside the hot water heater. Be aware that hot water heater temperatures *above* 120 degrees Fahrenheit can cause scalding, especially to young children and the elderly.

## Carbon Monoxide Precautions

Carbon Monoxide (CO) comes from poorly functioning appliances, or appliances that are not vented or incorrectly vented. You can't see or smell CO. Only a CO detector can alert you to a problem.

Health officials recommend having CO detectors on every level of your home and within 10 feet of any sleeping areas. CO poisoning symptoms can occur immediately or more gradually after long-term exposure. Symptoms are similar to the flu but do not include a fever. They include dizziness, shortness of breath, headaches, confusion, nausea, and fainting. If you suspect CO poisoning, get fresh air immediately. Be sure to call for help before helping others. CO poisoning can lead to brain damage or even death.

## Flammable Materials

Keep combustible and flammable materials (such as gasoline cans, cleaning solvents, rags and cloths) at least 18 inches away from your gas appliances.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

City of Richmond  
Department of Public Utilities  
Richmond Gas Works  
804-646-4646

[http://www.richmondgov.com/  
PublicUtilities/NaturalGasSafety/index.aspx](http://www.richmondgov.com/PublicUtilities/NaturalGasSafety/index.aspx)

Call Before You Dig (Virginia) 811  
or  
1-800-552-7001

Office of Pipeline Safety  
[www.phmsa.dot.gov/pipeline](http://www.phmsa.dot.gov/pipeline)

*You will receive additional safety information throughout the year in material included with your monthly bill. We encourage you to review this important information.*



# Being Safe with Natural Gas

RICHMOND GAS WORKS



## Pipeline Purpose and Reliability

The City of Richmond Department of Public Utilities (DPU) operates 1,945 miles of natural gas pipelines for residential, commercial and industrial use in Richmond, Henrico County and portions of Chesterfield and Hanover counties. It is likely that everyone lives or works near a natural gas pipeline.

These pipelines quietly, reliably and efficiently deliver natural gas throughout the service territory. Natural gas energy is the most popular home heating fuel in America and its pipeline system is among the safest and most secure methods of transporting energy.

The natural gas industry works very closely with government and stays abreast of new security methods and technologies to ensure the highest levels of security. Individual gas utilities also evaluate their security procedures on a regular basis and continually enhance security programs as necessary and appropriate to meet their needs.

## Hazard Awareness and Prevention

The U.S. natural gas transmission and distribution system has the best safety record of any type of transportation system in the country. Natural gas is clean, convenient, and efficient, which makes it the popular energy choice. Like all forms of energy, however, it must be handled properly. Despite an excellent safety record, a gas leak caused by damage to a pipeline may pose a hazard and has the potential to ignite. We work diligently to ensure pipeline safety through a variety of measures including:

- One-call Miss Utility and Dig Safe programs
- Inspection programs
- Design and construction practices
- Workforce qualification
- Public education
- Industry safety practices and government oversight
- Pipeline markers and facility mapping
- Gas leak surveys
- Patrol of critical gas facilities
- Gas pressure monitoring
- Gas odorization
- Liason with city, county and municipal agencies
- Security measures

## Leak Recognition and Response

A natural gas leak is usually recognized by smell, sight, or sound.

- Smell - Natural gas is colorless and odorless. Before it reaches you, we add a distinctive, pungent odor (rotten eggs smell) so you will recognize it quickly.
- Sight - You may see a white cloud, mist, fog, bubbles in standing water, or vegetation that appears to be dead or dying for no apparent reason.
- Sound - You may hear an unusual noise like roaring, hissing or whistling.

What should you do if you suspect a leak?

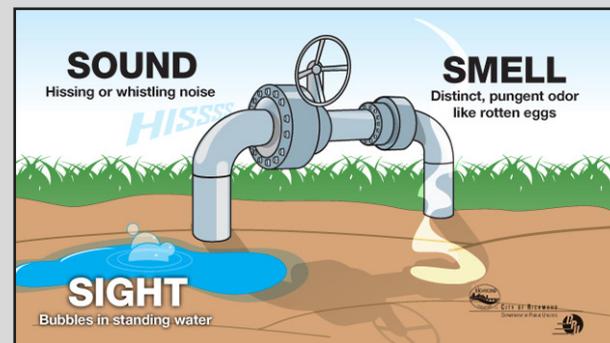
- Protect life first. MOVE to a safe environment.
- Call 911 or City of Richmond DPU at 804-646-4646.
- DO NOT strike a match, use telephones, switch on or off appliances, lights or even a flashlight in the area where you smell gas. These items can produce sparks that might ignite and cause an explosion.

For emergency personnel

- Emergency response officials should secure the area and take steps to eliminate ignition sources.
- Evacuate the general public from the vicinity of the leak
- Contact City of Richmond DPU at 804-646-4646

For excavators

- Immediately stop work and evacuate the site to a safe distance
- Immediately eliminate all sources of ignition (e.g., truck and car motors, backhoes, etc.)
- Call City of Richmond DPU at 804-646-4646
- Alert everyone on the premises
- Keep the public and traffic away
- DO NOT try to fix the pipe or slow the rate of leaking gas
- DO NOT try to extinguish a gas burning fire unless there is a threat to life
- If you SUSPECT or become aware of a dent, scratch, or coating damage to the pipeline, notify Richmond DPU at 804-646-4646 immediately.



## Damage Prevention Awareness

The greatest risk to underground pipelines is accidental damage during excavations. To protect our natural gas pipelines and other underground facilities, it is critical that people use the one-call Miss Utility system prior to ANY excavation related activities on public and private property.

The law requires that ALL excavators notify the local one-call Miss Utility system by dialing 811 or 800-552-7001 before digging.

The one-call Miss Utility center will contact the owners of the underground facilities and pipelines in the immediate area of digging so that they can mark the location of their facilities prior to excavation. Excavators are required to allow time for utilities to mark their facilities and are required to take certain precautions when working in the immediate area of underground facilities. The use of mechanized equipment is prohibited within two feet of either side of any utility. The one-call Miss Utility center can provide the specific details of what is required. Failure to comply with this law can jeopardize public safety, and can result in costly damages and substantial fines.

Even if you cause what seems to be minor damage to a pipeline or gas facility (e.g., gas meters), notify the City of Richmond DPU immediately at 804-646-4646. A gouge, scrape, dent, or crease to the pipe or its coating may cause a future leak or failure. It is imperative that the pipeline owners inspect and repair any damage.

## Pipeline Location

Natural gas is drawn from deep inside the earth and fed into lines that eventually feed into large transmission pipelines that crisscross the nation.

Once the gas arrives in Virginia, City of Richmond DPU distributes it through underground pipelines safely and reliably to its customers. Since these pipelines are underground, line markers are sometimes used when possible to approximate their location along a route. These markers display the material transported (yellow means natural gas), the name of the pipeline owner, and telephone number of the owner in the event of an emergency or damaged pipeline. These markers only indicate the general location of the pipeline and cannot be relied upon to indicate the exact location of the pipeline. Because many of these distribution lines are not marked, it is critical that people use the one-call Miss Utility system prior to ANY excavation. When excavation work is planned, the gas pipelines are identified with yellow paint markings or flags.

## Buried Fuel Lines

As a safety measure, the Federal Office of Pipeline Safety (Federal Regulation 49 CFR 192.16) requires the Richmond Department of Public Utilities, as a natural gas operator, to notify its customers of the need to maintain their underground or buried natural gas piping.

Any and all gas piping downstream (on the structure/house side) of the gas meter belongs to the customer, who is responsible for the maintenance and operation of this portion of the natural gas line.

DPU does not own this portion of the natural gas line; therefore, we do not routinely maintain or locate these private gas lines. Licensed commercial plumbers and heating contractors may be contacted for assistance in locating, inspecting, repairing, and maintaining these private gas lines. Underground gas piping should be:

- Periodically inspected for leaks
- Periodically inspected for corrosion if the piping is metallic
- Repaired if any unsafe condition is discovered, or the flow of gas should be shut off

Also, remember that these privately-owned gas lines should be marked by your contractor or plumber before any digging or excavation is done in the area. If the work will be close to the underground gas line, we suggest that the digging is done carefully and by hand.

## How to Get Additional Information

City of Richmond Department of Public Utilities - 804-646-4646

[www.richmondgov.com/PublicUtilities/NaturalGasSafety.aspx](http://www.richmondgov.com/PublicUtilities/NaturalGasSafety.aspx)

Call Before You Dig (Virginia) 811 or 800-552-7001  
[www.VA811.com](http://www.VA811.com)

Office of Pipeline Safety, [www.ops.dot.gov](http://www.ops.dot.gov)



Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.

### Dig With C.A.R.E. Keep Virginia Safe!

Marking Colors

- Electric
- Gas-Oil
- Communication
- Water
- Sewer
- Temporary Survey
- Irrigation
- Proposed Excavation

**C** Call Miss Utility before you dig.  
**A** Allow required time for marking.  
**R** Respect the marks.  
**E** Excavate carefully.

**Call Miss Utility @ 811**