CITY OF PALO ALTO UTILITIES
250 Hamilton Ave
Palo Alto, CA 94301

GAS SAFETY

What you need to know

WHAT IS A GAS EMERGENCY?

- A leaking pipeline
- A weakened or damaged pipeline
- Fire or explosion near or directly involving a pipeline
- Natural disaster affecting a pipeline, such as earthquake, flood or soil erosion

DID YOU KNOW?

Natural gas is a mixture of gases that formed from the decayed remains of ancient plants and animals buried deep in the earth. The main ingredient in natural gas is methane.

Natural gas is colorless and odorless. A chemical that smells like rotten eggs is added to the gas so you can smell leaks.

IMPORTANT CONTACT NUMBERS

Emergencies: **911**

Leaks (24-hour): **(650) 329-2579**

Before clearing sewers:
(650) 329-2579

Before digging: **811**

GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT PIPELINE SAFETY

Call City of Palo Alto Water/Gas/Wastewater Operations at:

(650) 329-2579

www.cityofpaloalto.org/safeutility

www.usanorth.org

Para obtener más información deseguridad de gas, visite
www.cityofpaloalto.org/GasSafetySpanish

對於燃氣安全信息
www.cityofpaloalto.org/GasSafetyMandarin

Call 911
in an emergency

24-Hour Call Line
(650) 329-2579

Suspect a gas leak?
Call 911

IDENTIFYING GAS LEAKS

HOW TO IDENTIFY A GAS PIPELINE

Aboveground pipeline markers at street crossings, highways, railroads and fences indicate natural gas pipelines are buried underground. Emergency phone numbers are posted on the markers and should be used if a gas leak is detected or an emergency situation occurs.

HOW TO RECOGNIZE A PIPELINE LEAK

Mercaptan, a sulfur chemical, is added to natural gas to make it smell similar to rotten eggs. The smell of mercaptan helps you detect even the smallest amount of natural gas in the air.

24-Hour Call Line: (650) 329-2579

- Fire near pipeline
- Unusual dirt or dust blowing
- Pool of liquid on the ground, possibly bubbling
- Persistent bubbles in standing water
- Discolored vegetation

Call 911

- Explosion near pipeline
- Hissing or roaring sound

Call 911

KNOW WHAT TO DO

IF YOU DETECT A GAS LEAK OR HIT A PIPELINE WHILE DIGGING:

- **Leave** the area immediately and call from elsewhere.
- **Call 911** or the City of Palo Alto 24-hour emergency number at **(650) 329-2579**.
- **Do not turn** any lights, appliances, phones or equipment on or off.
- **Do not strike** a match.
- **Do not look** for a gas leak.

STAYING SAFE

The City of Palo Alto Utilities is committed to safely operating its underground natural gas distribution system comprised of approximately

210 miles of distribution piping,

17,500 customer gas service lines,

24,160 gas meters.

OUR RESPONSIBILITY

The City owns, and is responsible for, the gas line on your property connecting the City main to your home gas meter. We maintain the natural gas distribution system in accordance with prescribed federal safety standards.

All utility meters and valves are City property. Authorized utility workers can turn on and off City meters and valves on your property. Do not turn off your gas meter unless it is an emergency — if you smell gas inside or outside the home. If you can visibly see gas blowing, leave the area immediately and call 911.

Once a gas meter is turned off, it is NEVER safe to turn the valves back on yourself — safety and pressure checks are required before restoring service.

Call the City of Palo Alto Utilities Dispatch 24 hours a day at (650) 329-2579.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

PROPERTY OWNERS ARE RESPONSIBLE for safely maintaining gas lines from the gas meter to their homes, yards, pools, hot tubs, second units, appliances, cottages, workshops or any other location on their properties. **It is an owner's responsibility to maintain piping to avoid corrosion and/or leakage.**

To ensure safe, reliable operation, buried piping should be inspected periodically for corrosion and leaks. You (or the building owner) are advised to contact a licensed plumber or heating contractor to locate and inspect your buried gas piping. If an unsafe condition is discovered, repairs should be made as soon as possible.

CLEAR METER ACCESS - IT'S THE LAW

You are NOT allowed to store objects above gas meters because they may fall and damage the meters. Keep meters free of debris and do not block the meter by planting trees, shrubs or other plants near it.

INSTALLING LANDSCAPING? EXPANDING BUILDINGS?

CALL BEFORE YOU DIG

AVOID COSTLY ACCIDENTS AND DANGEROUS CONDITIONS.

Call Underground Service Alert (USA) at 811 or (800) 227-2600 a minimum of 48 hours prior to any excavation. **USA is a free service.** Visit **www.usanorth.org** for more information.

It is your responsibility to call USA before digging begins. Failure to call this number can result in liability for any damage or loss of property.

1. **Properly mark** your excavation area.
2. **Call USA** and provide a detailed description of where and when you plan to dig.
3. **USA will then locate and mark all** underground natural gas pipelines and other utilities prior to your excavation work.

MAKE SURE IT IS SAFE BEFORE YOU:

Stake a sapling tree • Dig a trench • Build or repair a fence or deck • Pour a building foundation • Dig up sprinklers • Plant a tree • Remove a parking median • Replace a driveway or walkway • Dig around utility lines •

WHEN YOU DIG:

Excavate by hand within two feet horizontally near buried gas pipelines, locate piping in advance and dig by hand to avoid damaging gas lines.

Dig with care. In the event that a natural gas pipeline is disturbed, move away from the escaping gas, immediately call 911 and notify the City of Palo Alto at (650) 329-2579. The City will dispatch crews to fix the leak and make the area safe.

AT HOME

KEEP GAS APPLIANCES WELL-TUNED AND OPERATING SAFELY

(E.G., FURNACE, BOILER, WATER HEATER, CLOTHES DRYER, BARBECUE GRILL, STOVE, OVEN)

Pilot lights and burners have a steady, blue flame when operating correctly. (Decorative gas fire log flames are an exception. They may be either blue or yellow.)

Keep the area around appliances/equipment clean and unblocked to allow proper airflow.

Keep at least one multipurpose fire extinguisher handy.

Inspect all gas appliances, furnaces, vents, flues, chimneys and gas lines every year or two using qualified industry professionals.

Avoid fires and explosions — keep flammables and combustibles away from gas appliances (e.g., paper, mops, brooms, laundry, lighter fluid, gasoline, solvents, oil-based paint, etc.)

NEED TO CLEAR A SEWER LINE?

CALL US FIRST: (650) 329-2579

On rare occasions, natural gas pipelines have been found within sewer lines. When there is a sewer blockage, equipment used to unclog the sewer line can penetrate the gas pipe, causing a gas release. **Please call (650) 329-2579 BEFORE your sewer pipe is cleared or rooted out.** At no cost to you, we will come out promptly to verify a natural gas pipeline is not near your sewer line. If you fail to call us prior to cleaning out your sewer line and you or your plumber sense or see an obstruction, be sure to call us immediately so we can verify that a natural gas pipeline has not been damaged. Of course, **if you believe you've penetrated a gas line — or any time you smell gas — leave the area immediately and call 911.**

ALERT: CARBON MONOXIDE IS ODORLESS YET HARMFUL

Carbon monoxide detection alarms are required in all single-family residences with gas heating, appliances, fireplaces and/or attached garages.

Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless, tasteless gas produced during the incomplete combustion of fuels, such as gasoline, coal, wood, charcoal, kerosene, propane, heating oil and natural gas. If the normally blue furnace flame turns yellow, your furnace may be producing carbon monoxide. When inhaled, this gas prevents the blood from absorbing oxygen, causing illness and even death. Warning sign severity depends on the amount of exposure, but signs include headache, nausea, fatigue, blurry vision and flu-like symptoms that disappear or lessen when you leave the building.

OTHER SIGNS OF CARBON MONOXIDE PRESENCE:

- Unusually high indoor humidity
- Persistent heavy condensation on walls & windows
- Stuffy or stale indoor air
- Soot or water collecting near a burner or vent
- Your carbon monoxide alarm is sounding

SUSPECT CARBON MONOXIDE IN YOUR HOME?

Immediately open windows to ventilate the area, then leave the room. If you experience physical symptoms, get everyone out of the house and call a doctor. Call 911 to find the source of the carbon monoxide. Do not return until the condition is corrected.

SPECIAL MESSAGES

FOR RESIDENTS OR BUSINESSES NEAR MARKERS

Gas pipelines are buried underground and their approximate locations are usually indicated by markers along routes where the pipes intersect streets, highways, or railways. If you smell, see or hear a leak, leave the area, then call 911 or the pipeline operator listed on the marker.

FOR PUBLIC OFFICIALS OR EMERGENCY FIRST RESPONDERS:

In the event of an emergency on a Palo Alto gas pipeline, **call 911 or emergency dispatchers at (650) 329-2579** so the City can send utility and emergency crews to the site to shut off the gas and begin necessary repairs.

1. If a leak is detected, secure the area around the leak with barricades and control access. Prohibit smoking and direct traffic away from the area.
2. Assess whether to evacuate homes, businesses, schools and other facilities.
3. If the leaking gas has caught fire, try to prevent the spread of fire, but do not attempt to extinguish it, as there is a chance of secondary flames and unexpected reignition.

FOR CONTRACTORS, EXCAVATORS, LANDSCAPERS

Unintended dig-ins are the leading cause of serious and costly pipeline accidents. Call Underground Service Alert (USA) at 811 at least 48 hours before you dig. Properly mark your excavation area in the field and wait for your work site to be marked before excavating. Once the underground utilities are marked, dig with care. Note that you are responsible to pay for any damages your crew causes. **If you hit a pipeline, even if you do not see visible damage, call 911 immediately** before proceeding. Even a minor gouge, dent, scrape or crease can lead to a serious hazard.

Call Before You Dig
Underground Service Alert (USA) — 811

Individuals with disabilities who require accommodations to access City facilities, services or programs, or who would like information on the City's compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, may contact the City's ADA Coordinator at (650) 329-2550 (voice) or email ada@cityofpaloalto.org

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