



Arlington Fire District

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For Emergencies
DIAL 911

“Safeguarding Our Community”

With the introduction of Natural Gas service into your community, we wanted to take the opportunity to provide this important safety information to you

What is natural gas?

Natural gas is delivered to homes and businesses via underground pipelines. It is primarily methane, but contains small amounts of several other gasses. It is lighter than air, and will rise safely into the atmosphere & dissipate, unless it becomes trapped in a building or some other location. By comparison, Propane (like in your BBQ grill tank) is heavier than air, and sinks to the ground. It will collect in low-lying areas outdoors, or in the basements of houses. It is stored in cylinders under pressure on your property. When either natural gas or propane collects in sufficient quantities, explosions become a real possibility. All that is necessary is a spark or open flame. When properly burned, natural gas operates appliances, such as heating systems, clothes dryers & stoves. Although natural gas is odorless and colorless, utility companies add a pungent odor—similar to rotten eggs—to make it easier to detect leaks. Even though a distinctive odor is added to natural gas to assist in the detection of leaks, you should not rely only on your nose to alert you to natural gas leaks. There are a number of reasons why your sense of smell may not always let you know that gas is leaking. For example, some people may not be able to smell the odor because they have a diminished sense of smell, or some other factor. Other conditions such as common colds, sinus conditions, allergies, eating certain foods, inattentiveness, and the use of tobacco, alcohol, drugs, or some medications may also lessen the ability to smell the odor. In addition, the odor may be masked by other smells such as cooking, damp/musty conditions or chemical odors. Also, certain conditions (like underground leaks) may cause the loss of odorant, so that it is not detectable by smell. Regardless, everyone in your house should know how to identify the smell of natural gas and what to do if they detect it.

Always put safety first when using natural gas appliances of any kind:

- Natural gas flame should be blue with a hint of yellow near the tip; a yellow flame indicates incomplete combustion and is potentially dangerous. (Except for decorative fireplaces). If you suspect one of your appliances are not operating properly, immediately turn it OFF and contact a qualified service technician. Have your gas appliances installed and serviced only by qualified professionals. Working on gas lines or appliances is NOT for “Do-It-Yourselfers”
- You must get a building permit to change your existing appliances to natural gas. Contact the Town of Poughkeepsie Building Dept at (845)486-3655.
- Always follow manufacturer’s instructions for the care & use of gas fueled devices.
- Never use your stove or oven for heating your home.
- If you have forced hot air heat -- replace your furnace air filters monthly during the heating season.
- Keep clutter and flammable objects/liquids away from natural gas appliances. This includes: gasoline, kerosene, propane or butane bottles, or cylinders. Never bring your BBQ grill tank into the house or garage for any reason
- Never use flammable solvents or cleaning agents around an operating gas appliance.

What are the potential dangers of gas powered appliances?

Natural gas appliances are typically very safe to use, but a malfunctioning device can have deadly consequences. Problems with gas-powered appliances may arise if gas leaks occur or if the gas burner does not have enough air to burn correctly. If gas appliances are not operated correctly, they can cause a buildup of carbon monoxide (CO). CO poisoning can cause a variety of health problems. Headaches, dizziness, and fatigue are often linked to low levels of exposure. Higher levels of carbon monoxide exposure can cause more drastic symptoms, such as nausea, loss of muscle control and even death.

Carbon monoxide alarms give you an early warning to the presence of CO. Every home is required by NYS Law to have at least one CO alarm installed. The CO alarm should be placed near your bedroom(s) to make sure you hear the warning at night. Additional CO alarms are strongly recommended, and should be located on every floor level of your home. Either plug-in or battery operated devices will work fine, so long as plug-in units have a battery back-up (for power outages). CO alarms & smoke detectors are not the same, and you need to have both to be properly protected. Combination CO/Smoke alarms are available in most hardware stores and home centers, or you can install separate devices. Make sure any of these devices are mounted according to the manufacturer's instructions. Smoke detectors should be installed inside each bedroom, outside each sleeping area (i.e. hallway), and on every level of the home. Do not install them close to kitchens or bathrooms, as this may cause false activations. Interconnected smoke detectors are the best, but cost more money to purchase. Smoke detectors must be replaced every 10 years, and CO alarms must be replaced every 5 years. Beyond those time limits, they may not reliably operate. Specific brand name doesn't matter, so long as the device is UL Listed.

Battery operated or plug-in natural gas leak alarms are also available at local home stores and may be considered for an added measure of safety, but are not required in anyone's home. If you decide to purchase one of these devices, make sure you follow the manufacturer's installation instructions.

Call Before You Dig

Having the location of all underground utilities marked in advance is essential to protect yourself and others from injury and to prevent damage to underground gas mains or other utilities. Contact *Dig Safely. New York* at least 2 working days before you plan to start your project. Digging can be dangerous and costly if you don't have underground facilities marked before you start. It's also required by NYS law. Contact them at (800)962-7962, or dial 811.

What should I do if I suspect a leak?

If you believe there is a gas leak in your home, move all family members outside immediately. Leave doors open as you pass through but do not stop to open windows. Immediately extinguish any burning candles or cigarettes. Don't use any electrical switches, including light switches, thermostats, doorbells, garage door openers, etc. and never use a telephone or cell phone from inside the home. Any electrical spark can be dangerous. Call 911 from a safe location outside or from a neighbor's house.

How do I get more information?

The Arlington Fire District stands ready to assist you in any way possible, 24 hours a day. If you think you have a leak, or if you are unsure whether an emergency situation exists, **CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY**. Time is critical, and we would rather respond to investigate a non-emergency situation, than have a life-threatening situation develop because you delayed making the call. For questions or other non-emergencies, consult our website www.afd.org or call our business line at 845-486-6300.