

Safety/Public Awareness

CITY OF SHELBY NATURAL GAS DEPARTMENT PUBLIC AWARENESS PROGRAM

The City of Shelby's Natural Gas Department strives to operate our system with an emphasis on safety. We are bound by many Federal, State and local regulations to ensure the overall safety of the system. Our staff is continually being trained in all aspects of the natural gas industry. We are dedicated to providing reliable, responsive, quality services to the community. You, as our customers can help us to keep the natural gas system safe. The following information will be useful to you, and also help keep us informed of safety issues.

What is Natural Gas

Natural gas is a colorless and odorless gas in its natural state. An odorant called mercaptan is added to the gas to give it the distinct smell of rotten eggs. Despite the bad smell, natural gas is non-toxic. However, if the natural gas accumulates in an enclosed room, it can displace the oxygen causing asphyxiation. It is lighter than air. If a release of natural gas happens outdoors, it will dissipate harmlessly into the atmosphere. Natural gas is the safest, most dependable, and trouble free fuel known to man. As with any energy source, natural gas must be used with care and respect. Customers need to do their part to follow recommended safety and operating practices

Recognize and Report a Natural Gas Leak

The following information will help you detect a natural gas leak. (This may not be a complete list of things for you to check or you may not be comfortable checking them.) Always remember to be safe. If you have any doubts, do not hesitate to give us a call.

First and foremost will be the smell of rotten eggs, or sometimes a sickly sweet smell. Natural gas on its own has no detectable odor. Mercaptan is a chemical that is added to the gas to give it its distinctive odor. This is a very concentrated odorant that helps you detect a very small leak quickly. "Scratch and Sniff" pamphlets are available to give you an idea of what natural gas smells like.

Secondly, you may hear a hissing noise. This would happen in the event of a cracked fitting or connection. If outside it may be a cut or broken line. (Note: A gas meter does make a noise when it is operating. This is normal.)

Sometimes a leak underground may cause vegetation to die. This is caused by the leaking natural gas displacing the oxygen in the ground.

Bubbles may appear in a wet area such as a puddle in your yard near a gas service line or a gas main.

A dry spot in a moist field. Natural gas has a very low humidity level.

A fire or explosion on or near a pipeline facility.

Underground leaks can cause dust or dirt to be blown into the air.

If you encounter any of these situations, remember to always be safe. Evacuate the building or move to a safe location.

For a natural gas leak inside a building:

DO NOT try to locate the problem yourself.

DO NOT turn on or off any lights in the building.

DO NOT operate anything electrical: phones, radios, doorbells, etc.

DO NOT operate any vehicle or motor of any kind in or near the building. Walk away from the building, do not drive away.

Quickly open windows and exterior doors.

Evacuate any occupants from the building to a safe location.

Warn others to keep clear of the building.

Avoid all potential ignition sources.

From a safe distance away from the suspected leak call 911, the emergency operators will contact us.

For a natural gas leak outside:

From a safe area away from the leak, call 911.

Warn others to stay away from the area.

Eliminate any ignition sources, lawnmowers, and vehicles, keep people from smoking, do not use cell phones or radios in the area. (Only do this if it is safe.)

Pipeline Markers, Test Stations and Right-of Ways

The COS Natural Gas Department has approximately 25 miles of cross country R-O-W's that it maintains. These R-O-W's usually have our higher pressure lines on them. At each road crossing and along the R-O-W, we have pipeline markers.

The pipeline markers are 2" yellow plastic poles about 4' tall that have "Caution Gas Pipeline, Before Digging Call City of Shelby Gas Department (704) 484-6866, (704) 484-6852" written on them. Pipeline markers are also throughout our system showing which side of the road that our gas mains are on. These markers show the approximate location of the gas mains, they are not exact. Before digging anywhere in the area of a pipeline marker, call us or the NC One Call, (800 632-4949), to have the gas lines located. This is a free service.

Test stations can look similar to pipeline markers. An above ground test station usually is a 2" to 5" Yellow pole that has the same information on them as a pipeline marker. Test stations have wires that are connected to the natural gas mains. We use these wires to conduct the cathodic protection surveys.

If you notice that a pipeline marker or a test station has been damaged, or that someone is digging in the area without the lines being located, please give us a call.

Gas Meter Tips:

Know where your gas meter is.

Keep it clear for emergency responses.

Keep shrubbery trimmed around your gas meter.

Never allow trees to grow around the meter set. As the tree grows it can cause fittings to break.

Do not enclose your meter.

Do not tie pets or other objects to your gas meter or gas piping.

Do not pile mulch up so high that it touches the bottom of the meter or covers the cut off valve.

Do not electrically ground anything to the gas meter or service line.

North Carolina One Call

The North Carolina One-Call Center, a non-profit organization funded by members, takes excavation information from contractors, utilities and homeowners, anyone engaged in excavation activities, and transmits this information to our members. The member utility owner or their representatives will mark the location of the underground facilities within 48 hours of your call, free of charge. The members range from utilities to universities, from municipalities to home owner associations. Each caller is informed of the members that will be notified. The excavator needs to call directly, any utility owner or their representative that is not a member to physically mark the utility lines.

The Center provides a toll free number, 1-800-632-4949, that can be reached from anywhere in the continental United States. The North Carolina One-Call Center does not mark utility lines. It does provide an easy communications link between excavator and utility owner.