

# Natural gas safety in your home



*In the Community  
to Serve®*

Montana-Dakota Utilities Co. is committed to providing safe and reliable natural gas service to our customers. Natural gas is a clean, efficient and safe fuel that adds comfort and ease to your life. It helps heat your home, warm your showers, cook your food, dry your clothes and more. Natural gas is safe when used with proper care; as with any fuel source, it is important to follow proper safety precautions to keep your home safe.

## Natural Gas Leaks

Natural gas is a colorless, odorless, non-toxic substance. For easy detection, an odorant is added to help you identify a potential natural gas leak. The odor gives off a smell similar to rotten eggs or sulfur. If you smell natural gas in your home:

- Leave the building immediately.
- If you are outside, leave the area immediately.
- From a safe place, call Montana-Dakota at 800-MDU-FAST (800-638-3278).
- Stay away until given the “all clear” from a Montana-Dakota employee or emergency official.

## Remember to leave the building immediately and DO NOT:

- Turn on any lights, electrical switches or unplug appliances in the building.
- Smoke or use lighters, matches or other open flames.
- Turn off any battery-powered, rechargeable or electrical

- device including phone, garage door openers, radios, TVs, computers or any device that could create a spark.
- Use telephones of any type, including cordless, cell or landline phones in the building.

## Carbon Monoxide

Carbon Monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless and tasteless gas that is produced when any fossil fuel (including natural gas) is burned. When fossil fuels do not burn properly, CO can build up and cause sickness and even death. CO can build up when gas appliances are used improperly or are not vented properly. The warning signs of CO poisoning include:

- Dizziness, nausea, headache and coughing.
- Irregular heartbeat.
- Unconsciousness.

If you suspect CO poisoning, get fresh air immediately. Stay outside and call 911 for emergency assistance.

Some safety measures that can help prevent CO poisoning include:

- Never heat your home or apartment with your gas range or oven.
- Have your gas appliances and heating systems inspected annually by a qualified contractor.
- Install CO detectors in your home. Follow the manufacturer’s installation and use guidelines.

## Natural Gas Appliance and Heating Safety

On natural gas appliances and heating systems, the color of the flame is a good indicator of the degree of combustion. The flame should always burn blue, not orange or yellow. If the flame is not blue, it may be a sign that the equipment needs adjusting or cleaning. Appliances and heating systems should be checked and adjusted by a qualified service technician.

- **Water Heaters:** Make sure your hot water heater is set to no higher than 120°F to prevent accidental burns.
- **Furnaces:** Have a qualified service technician check your heating system annually. Technicians check for proper combustion, carbon monoxide levels, flue gas temperature, burners and the heat exchanger for proper operation.
- **Keep Flammables Away From Appliances:** Never use or store flammable products such as gasoline, solvents or adhesives near a water heater or any other natural gas or electric appliance because vapors from flammable liquids can ignite.

## Natural Gas Meters

Natural gas meters are designed to withstand extreme weather conditions, but remember to protect them from ice and snow buildup during the harsh winter months. Accumulated snow places stress on the meter piping. Damage to the piping can cause a gas leak. To avoid undue stress on your gas meter:

- Try to keep gas meters free of heavy accumulations of snow or ice.
- Do not strike meters with snow blowers, blades or shovels.
- Do not kick the gas meter to break or clear ice.
- Remove icicles from overhead eaves and gutters to assure dripping water does not splash and freeze on the meter or vent pipes.

## Call Before You Dig

The greatest risk to underground natural gas pipelines is accidental damage during excavation. Even minor damage such as a dent, scrape, crease or gouge to a pipeline coating may cause a leak or failure. If you or a contractor will be digging on your property, remember to call 811 before you dig. One free and easy call gets all of your utility lines marked and helps protect you from injury and expense. Remember to dig safely by:

- Calling 811 before digging.
- Waiting for the site to be marked.
- Respecting the marks.
- Digging with care.



**Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.**

For additional information on pipelines in your area, visit the following state agencies:

- Montana – [www.psc.mt.gov](http://www.psc.mt.gov)
- North Dakota – [www.psc.nd.gov](http://www.psc.nd.gov)
- South Dakota – [www.puc.sd.gov](http://www.puc.sd.gov)
- Wyoming – <https://psc.wyo.gov>

Or visit the National Pipeline Mapping System at [www.npms.phmsa.dot.gov](http://www.npms.phmsa.dot.gov).

[www.montana-dakota.com](http://www.montana-dakota.com)



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**For more information, call 800-638-3278.**