

Natural Gas Safety

Natural gas is used by more than 50 percent of American households as their main heating source. Natural gas is clean, efficient, and relatively safe. However, because there are potential dangers associated with natural gas usage, the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) recommends that consumers remember these safety tips.

Carbon Monoxide (CO) Poisoning

The chemical properties of natural gas make it a clean fuel source. However, those same properties make it potentially dangerous for consumers if their natural gas appliances are not properly maintained. One of the dangers of poorly maintained or improperly used appliances is carbon monoxide poisoning. If a faulty furnace does not burn natural gas properly, or is not vented properly, carbon monoxide can begin to build in the home. When a person breathes carbon monoxide, their brain and organs are robbed of the oxygen necessary to function properly, and they can become sick and incapacitated very quickly. Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are similar to those of the flu without a fever. Those experiencing these symptoms should get out of the house and call 9-1-1, the fire department, or emergency medical services immediately.

To reduce the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning, here are a few tips:

- Install a carbon monoxide detector. These devices work similarly to a smoke detector, only they measure the amount of carbon monoxide in the air.
- Have appliances that use natural gas inspected by a qualified repair person once a year.
- Inspect the vents, flues, and chimneys of all gas water heaters, furnaces, and fireplaces to ensure proper ventilation of exhaust.
- Never use an oven to heat the house. This can damage the oven and cause carbon monoxide to be released into the home.
- Never sleep in a room heated by a gas or kerosene space heater that does not have proper venting.

Gas Line Leaks

While rare, natural gas line leaks can be extremely dangerous. The most telling sign of a natural gas line leak is the familiar rotten egg odor the natural gas coming into the home has. This odor is added to the natural gas so it can be detected in the event of a leak.

The biggest hazard of a gas leak is an explosion. When natural gas builds up in an enclosed area, it becomes extremely volatile. A gas build up has the potential to be explosive, or could make those in the area very sick. Gas leaks in the home can be easily prevented by ensuring flexible gas lines are inspected regularly and installed properly by licensed professionals.

Gas leaks outside the home are dangerous as well. Most gas lines coming into the home are buried underground. Before doing any job that requires digging outside, homeowners should call the **Ohio Utilities Protection Service at (800) 362-2764** at least 48 hours before digging. The utilities will be

contacted and asked to mark the lines they own. After the lines have been marked, safe, careful digging can begin.

If you detect a strong gas odor, follow these tips:

- Do not attempt to locate the leak.
- Do not turn on **or** off any electrical appliances.
- Do not smoke or use any open flames.
- Leave the house and, from a safe distance, call the utility company and 9-1-1.
- When digging outside, if a natural gas line is damaged, call the utility immediately. Do not attempt to repair the line.

By following these safety tips, natural gas can continue to be a safe and efficient source of energy for the home.

If you would like to know more about the PUCO or have utility-related questions or concerns,

contact the PUCO at:

(800) 686-PUCO (7826)

(800) 686-1570 (TDD/TTY)

In Columbus only:

(614) 466-3292

(614) 466-8180 (TDD/TTY)

www.PUCO.ohio.gov