

## Keep your family safe around natural gas

# Energy Savings Tips

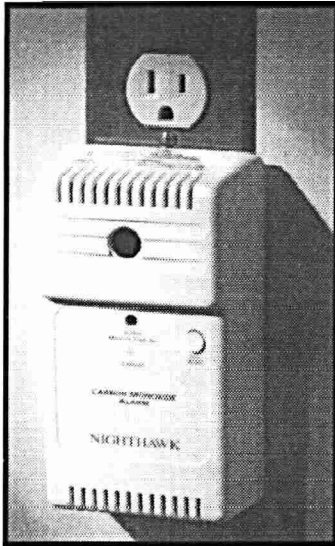


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Did you know that almost 75 percent of American homes are heated with natural gas?

Natural gas is one of the safest, cleanest and most efficient forms of energy available — but as with electricity, we need to be aware of its dangers.

**What is natural gas?**

Natural gas was formed deep in the earth during the dinosaur age. Wells and pumps bring it to the surface, and it comes to our homes through underground pipelines.

In its normal state, natural gas is colorless and odorless, so utility companies add a distinctive odor — some people compare it to rotten

eggs or a skunk — to make sure even the smallest leaks are detected easily.

**Using natural gas appliances**

As with any type of energy, the key to safety is common sense, but there are a few special rules to keep in mind with natural gas:

- Check the manufacturer's installation instructions for a gas appliance's clearance requirements.
- Keep paints, papers, aerosol sprays and other flammables away from gas appliances.
- Never store or stack boxes, laundry or other materials around the base of a gas appliance.
- Make sure the vent hood, pipes and flues aren't blocked, cracked or corroded.

**Don't let children play on or around the gas meter or any gas appliance, and don't let them hang or swing from gas pipes.**

• When using a gas range, keep long sleeves, towels and potholders away from the open flame.

If you're buying a new gas appliance, it's best to have it professionally installed. This ensures that

all connections are secure, all vent pipes and flues are clean and undamaged, and that the appliance is adjusted properly.

**Check your connections**

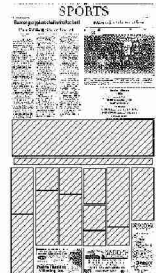
If you have an older gas appliance, especially an oven or clothes dryer, take a moment to check the connectors linking the appliance to the gas line. Flexible metal connectors, especially those made of uncoated brass, can weaken or crack over time, causing a leak.

If your appliance has these types of connectors, have them replaced with new ones made of stainless steel. Look for connectors that conform to the American National Standards Institute and bear either a CSA or IAPMO certification listing.

It is a good idea to replace any appliance connector that is more than 15 years old with a new connector. Never reuse an old connector on a new appliance.

**Call before you dig**

If you're planning to do any outdoor work, such as landscaping, installing a fence or building a deck, be sure to call before you dig. At least three days before you dig, call 811 and



your call will automatically be routed to the Diggers Hotline, or you can call them direct at 1-800-242-8511. Utility companies will be notified to mark underground utilities in the designated area so you can avoid them when you dig. This service is free of charge. When you dig, stay at least 18 inches away from the marked lines.

Keep your meters clear

During the winter, be sure to carefully clear snow and ice from around your energy meters – especially your natural gas meter – to ensure reliable service and safe operation of your appliances. It's also a good idea to keep the area around your meters clear of weeds, flowers, bushes, and debris. Periodically, utility employees need to work on the meters, so anything that obstructs the meter could be damaged or may have to be removed.

Responding to a natural gas emergency in your home

A natural gas leak will smell like rotten eggs or skunk. If the odor is strong or comes on suddenly, get

everyone out of the house immediately.

Don't stop to open windows, and don't touch anything that might create a spark, such as a light switch, telephone or a garage door opener. If possible, stay away from carpeted areas to avoid sparks from static electricity.

Do not try to find the source of the leak yourself. Call us from a neighbor's phone right away. If someone is ill or if there's an open flame anywhere in the area, call 911.

The dangers of carbon monoxide

Ideally, natural gas burns in an appliance completely and efficiently, mixing with the oxygen in the air to produce harmless carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and water vapor. But if conditions aren't right, the natural gas won't burn completely, and may produce deadly carbon monoxide (CO).

The symptoms of CO poisoning mimic the flu, so watch out for these warning signs:

- Headache
- Nausea or vomiting

- Dizziness or disorientation
- Muscle weakness or fatigue

- Difficulty waking

If the flu-like symptoms are not accompanied by fever, if everyone in the family is ill, or if the symptoms disappear when you leave the house, you might have a CO problem in your home. Leave the house immediately and have your appliances checked by a professional right away.

You can prevent CO poisoning by using your appliances correctly, keeping them well maintained, and by installing a quality CO detector in your home. CO detectors should be placed in the living areas of your home particularly near bedrooms or sleeping areas. If your CO detector's alarm sounds and you do not have symptoms, open windows and doors, and check the pilot light on all appliances. If the alarm continues to sound, shut off all appliances, leave the house and call a service professional right away.