

# Natural Gas Pipeline Safety

**What  
You  
Need to  
Know**



## Safe, Reliable and Popular Energy Choice

The United States relies on natural gas for nearly one-fourth (23 percent) of its energy needs. Natural gas is clean, convenient, and efficient, which makes it the country's most popular home heating fuel. Almost all of the natural gas consumed in the United States is produced domestically and delivered via a transmission and distribution infrastructure that has an outstanding safety record.

More than 2.2 million miles of pipelines and mains quietly, reliably and efficiently deliver natural gas everyday for use by residential, commercial and industrial customers.

## Ensuring Your Safety

Like all forms of energy, natural gas must be handled properly. We work very closely with industry and government agencies and stay abreast of new technologies and security methods to ensure the highest levels of service and safety.

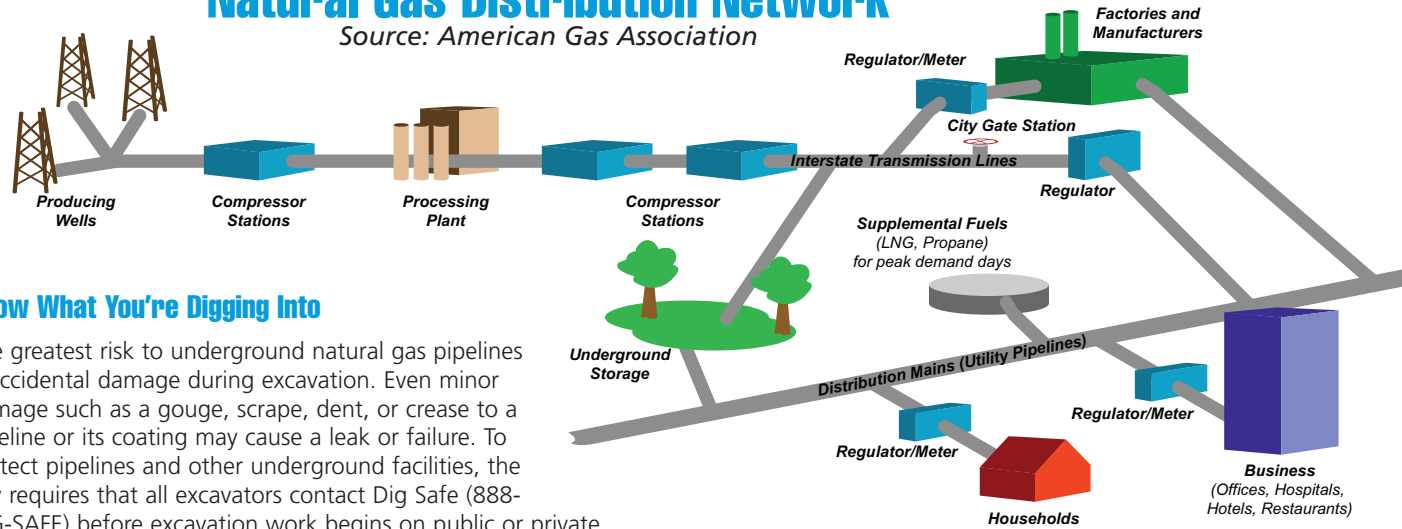
Despite an excellent safety record, a gas leak caused by damage to a pipeline may pose a hazard and has the potential to ignite.

A variety of measures are used to ensure pipeline safety including:

- Coordination with Dig Safe®
- Inspection programs
- Design and construction practices
- Workforce qualifications
- Industry safety practices and government oversight
- Pipeline markers and facility mapping
- Public education programs

# Natural Gas Distribution Network

Source: American Gas Association



## Know What You're Digging Into

The greatest risk to underground natural gas pipelines is accidental damage during excavation. Even minor damage such as a gouge, scrape, dent, or crease to a pipeline or its coating may cause a leak or failure. To protect pipelines and other underground facilities, the law requires that all excavators contact Dig Safe (888-DIG-SAFE) before excavation work begins on public or private property.

Dig Safe will contact the gas utility owners of underground facilities in the immediate area so the location of pipelines can be marked prior to excavation. This service is performed at no cost to you.

Underground pipelines often run along a public street, but may also be near private property. The area along each side of the pipeline is known as a right-of-way, which gives the facility owner the "right" to restrict certain activities, even on private property.

Right-of-way locations must be respected and are usually marked on maps filed with local municipalities. Dig Safe can provide excavators with specific details regarding precautions required in addition to having the location of underground facilities marked. Failure to comply with the law can jeopardize public safety, result in costly damages and lead to substantial fines.

## Using Your Senses

A gas leak is usually recognized by smell, sight, or sound.

### SMELL

Natural gas is colorless and odorless. A distinctive, pungent odor, similar to rotten eggs, is added so that you'll recognize it quickly. Not all transmission lines are odorized.

### SIGHT

You may see a white cloud, mist, fog, bubbles in standing water or blowing dust.

### SOUND

You may hear an unusual noise like roaring, hissing, or whistling.

## What You Should Do if You Suspect a Leak

**MOVE** . . . to a safe environment.

**CALL** . . . if NSTAR is your natural gas utility, call NSTAR at 800-592-2000. Otherwise call your local utility.

**DO NOT** . . . smoke or operate electrical switches or appliances. These items may produce a spark that might ignite the gas and cause an explosion.

**DO NOT** . . . assume someone else will report the condition.

*Provide the exact location, including cross streets.*

*Let us know if sewer construction or digging activities are going on in the area.*

## Pipeline Markers Show the Way

Whether you are at home, at work, or in a public place, it's likely you are in an area served by natural gas pipelines. Since pipelines are underground, line markers are sometimes used to indicate their approximate location along their route.

The markers display the material transported in the line, the name of the pipeline operator, and the telephone number where the operator can be reached in the event of an emergency.

Markers only indicate the general location of a pipeline and cannot be relied upon to indicate the exact position. Because many lines are not marked, it is critical that you contact Dig Safe (888-DIG-SAFE) prior to any excavation.

## Preparing for Emergencies

We work with emergency responders, state and local agencies to prevent and prepare for emergencies through training and periodic drills. These exercises test procedures, logistics, communications and more. Emergency plans and procedures are periodically updated and made available to state authorities.

## Commitment to Safety

NSTAR works with industry groups to continually enhance pipeline safety and training methods. At the state level, we work with regulators on programs designed to ensure the safe operation of the natural gas distribution system for customers and residents. And, as new technologies are developed in pipeline design, construction, inspections, and operations, we will continue to invest in pipeline integrity programs that will allow for the continued safe and secure delivery of natural gas.

## Call Before You Dig

Dig Safe is available to process requests for locating and marking underground facilities near an excavation project. Excavators are required by law to contact Dig Safe at 888-DIG-SAFE at least 72 business hours before excavation work begins on public or private property.

## Helpful Resources

Additional information can be obtained through the following organizations:

- National Pipeline Mapping System ([www.npms.rspa.dot.gov](http://www.npms.rspa.dot.gov))
- Office of Pipeline Safety (<http://ops.dot.gov>)
- Common Ground Alliance ([www.commongroundalliance.com](http://www.commongroundalliance.com))
- Northeast Gas Association ([www.northeastgas.org](http://www.northeastgas.org))
- American Gas Association ([www.aga.org](http://www.aga.org))

### NSTAR

800-592-2000  
[www.nstar.com](http://www.nstar.com)

### Dig Safe

888-DIG-SAFE (888-344-7233)  
[www.digsafe.com](http://www.digsafe.com)

Safety information provided in partnership with the Northeast Gas Association.