



Emergency Responders' Guide to Natural Gas Emergencies



We just want
you to be safe.

800-227-9187

CONTENTS

Protecting Life and Property

Upon Arrival at the Scene

Natural Gas Pipelines

Pipelines in Your Response Area

Properties/Flammability of Natural Gas

Signs of a Natural Gas Leak

Escaping Gas Indoors/Outdoors

Structural Fires Indoors/Outdoors

Carbon Monoxide

Carbon Monoxide Detectors

Gas Meter Shut-Off

Natural Disasters

Call 811 Before You Dig

Protecting Life and Property

Fire and police departments are often the first responders in public safety emergencies. In instances involving natural gas, Avista's primary objective is to protect life first, then property. This pamphlet includes information on natural gas safety. You also will find Avista's Emergency Operations Plan at our local offices.

Upon Arrival at the Scene

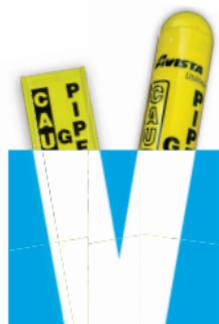
- Call Avista at 800-227-9187.
- Park upwind and away from natural gas pipelines.
- Secure the scene. Keep the public clear.
- Assess the hazards.
- **STAY CLEAR OF DAMAGED GAS PIPELINES.**
- If necessary, turn the gas valve off at the meter or appliance. (See Meter Shut Off section.)
- Prohibit smoking, flares and the operation of electrical equipment in the immediate area.



Natural Gas Pipelines

Avista uses pipelines as a reliable means to deliver natural gas to over 329,000 customers. Natural gas pipelines are extensively regulated by federal and state codes, and Avista routinely monitors and maintains its pipeline facilities to assure safety.

Natural gas pipeline systems consist of transmission and distribution main lines, generally installed alongside streets and highways, and service lines that run from the distribution main lines into homes and businesses.



Avista's pipelines are indicated by the use of aboveground markers that display a 24-hour emergency response number. These markers are found along the general route of the pipeline. It is important for you to know these markers do not show the exact location of distribution pipelines.

Pipelines in Your Response Area

Your department can access pipeline maps by registering with the National Pipeline Mapping System (NPMS) at www.npms.phmsa.dot.gov. NPMS will provide a list of pipelines by county or zip code, including the contact information of pipeline operators.

Avista continually monitors the integrity of our facilities used to deliver gas to customers. For information on Avista's Integrity Management program, please call **800-227-9187** (may include High Consequence Areas or HCAs).

Properties/Flammability of Natural Gas

- Natural gas is colorless and odorless in its natural state. Avista adds mercaptan (smells like rotten eggs) to make it easily detectable.
- Natural gas is non-toxic and non-poisonous.
- Natural gas is comprised mostly of methane and is lighter than air.
- Natural gas can be ignited when there is a 4% to 15% gas-to-air mixture.

Signs of a Natural Gas Leak



We add a sulfur-like rotten egg stench so you'll know right away if there's a problem.



Gas can hiss or even roar as it escapes from pipes.



Gas may make bubbles, blow dirt and kill plants when leaking from underground pipes.

Escaping Gas Indoors/Outdoors

- Do not flip electric switches and eliminate other possible gas ignition sources.
- Open windows and doors to ventilate the gas.
- Turn off heating and air conditioning systems that bring air into the building, if appropriate.
- Check for gas accumulating in nearby buildings, basements and sewers.
- Only use a combustible gas indicator to check for natural gas.
- If necessary, reroute or restrict traffic until the gas leak is under control. Do not use traffic flares which can ignite the gas.

Structural Fires Indoors/Outdoors

- Call Avista immediately if a burning structure has natural gas. Unseen pipeline/facilities damage can lead to gas migration in buildings, sewers and water lines.
- Never remove the gas meter, regulator or other facilities. Avista and state or federal regulatory agencies may need to test the operation of these facilities in their present configuration.
- Shut off the gas meter and tell Avista you did so. If a fire fueled by gas does not extinguish, the gas source may be coming from outside.
- When a natural gas fire occurs outdoors, make no attempt to extinguish it unless life is in jeopardy.
- Spray water on surrounding combustibles in danger of igniting.

Carbon Monoxide (CO)

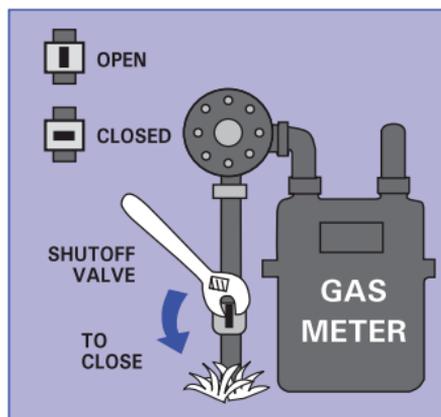
- CO is a colorless, odorless gas and is toxic to humans.
- CO can be produced if there is insufficient oxygen during the combustion of any carbon-based fuel—heating oil, gasoline, diesel fuel, propane, kerosene, natural gas, coal or wood.
- Malfunctioning appliances are often a cause of CO, as is the improper use of generators and barbecues indoors.
- Symptoms of CO poisoning may resemble the flu or include mental confusion, ringing in the ears or shortness of breath. Skin may turn pinkish and mucous membranes a cherry red.

Carbon Monoxide Detectors

- Avista will respond to calls concerning a CO detector that sets off an alarm if there is a natural gas appliance on the premises.
- Avista will test the area and attempt to discover the source of any CO. Any malfunctioning appliances will be adjusted or turned off pending repairs.
- Avista should be notified immediately of any situation involving a natural gas appliance suspected of producing CO.

Gas Meter Shut-Off

- If necessary, you can shut off gas where it leads to an appliance or at the gas meter.
- To shut off the meter, locate the valve on the adjacent pipe and give it a quarter turn in either



- direction using a large wrench. When the valve is crossways to the pipe, the line is closed.
- If you shut off a gas valve, LEAVE IT OFF. Only trained personnel should turn it back on.
- NEVER SHUT OFF a valve at the MAIN or regulator station, even in emergencies. It may cause public safety concerns elsewhere.

Natural Disasters

In the event of an earthquake, firestorm, widespread flooding or other large disaster, immediately tell Avista the locations of any line breaks, gas odors, submerged facilities or damaged structures that may have natural gas service. Do not shut off natural gas service to homes or businesses unless there is extensive damage to structures involved or a gas odor is present. When it is necessary, turn off the gas at the meter and leave it off until Avista arrives to inspect and restore service. If you must turn off service, remind affected residents not to use a barbecue or generator indoors.



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

Call before You Dig

It's the law to call 811 (or visit call811.com) two days before digging to avoid damaging underground utilities. It is important for emergency responders

ELECTRIC

GAS-OIL

COMMUNICATION

WATER

SEWER

TEMPORARY SURVEY

IRRIGATION

PROPOSED EXCAVATION

to know about ground markings that indicate the locations of facilities below. The colors here show the types of buried utilities.

For instructional safety videos

myavista.com/er

For additional information

800-227-9187

publicsafety@avistacorp.com

myavista.com

Avista
1411 East Mission MSC 20
P.O. Box 3727
Spokane, WA 99220-3727

