



# Natural Gas Safety Guide



We just want  
you to be safe.

Customer Service 800-227-9187

Know the smell  
of natural gas.

Scratch  
&  
Sniff

Natural gas is colorless and odorless. Avista adds Mercaptan to give it a rotten egg odor.

## Gas safety

### **Avista's natural gas system**

It takes a large system of underground pipelines to bring natural gas right to your home or business. Federal and state codes extensively regulate natural gas pipelines for public safety. At Avista, we do our part by routinely monitoring and maintaining our natural gas facilities to ensure safety.



## Why are we on your property?

From time to time, Avista workers need access to your property to complete regular natural gas system maintenance. This may include leak surveys, pipeline patrolling, meter inspections, meter changeouts or other procedures. Please ensure your meter is easily accessible at all times (especially important in case of a gas emergency). We just want to keep you safe.

## Recognizing a gas leak

Natural gas leaks don't happen often but can be dangerous. Colorless, odorless and lighter than air, natural gas can become combustible when mixed with air and exposed to an ignition source. Fortunately, staying safe is as easy as using your nose, ears and eyes.



Smell

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



Hear

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



See

Gas may make bubbles, blow dirt, kill vegetation or attract insects such as flies.

## If you notice a natural gas leak

- Leave the area by going upwind.
- If you're indoors, get outside fast.
- Do not use a phone, flip a switch or do anything that may cause a spark.
- At a neighbor's house or from a safe distance, call 911 and Avista Customer Service at **800-227-9187**.

## Carbon monoxide (CO)

Natural gas is non-toxic and is a clean burning fossil fuel. When burned under normal operating conditions, natural gas produces clean heat, carbon dioxide and water vapor. But if natural gas isn't burned properly, it can emit carbon monoxide, which is potentially hazardous.

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless and deadly gas produced when the combustion of any fuel (such as natural gas, propane, heating oil, wood, gasoline or kerosene) takes place without sufficient oxygen. CO poisoning may cause:

- headache
- nausea
- fatigue
- dizziness
- shortness of breath
- death



To alert your family when CO is present, buy a UL-listed carbon monoxide detector and install it according to manufacturer's instructions. Most CO detectors have a 10-year lifespan.

## Preventing CO poisoning

Malfunctioning appliances are often the cause of carbon monoxide poisoning, so periodically ask a qualified technician to service your heating system, water heater and other gas, oil, wood or coal-burning heaters and appliances. Ensure there is adequate ventilation, too.

## Responding to an outdoor natural gas leak

Puncturing a natural gas line could injure or kill you and others. If a line is severed and gas is escaping, follow these guidelines:

- Evacuate the area on foot, heading upwind.
- Alert others to evacuate and keep people away.
- Call 911 from a safe distance to report the emergency.
- Call and report the event to Avista.
- Avoid any action that may create a spark.
- Do NOT start vehicles, flip switches on or off, or make or hang up calls near the area.
- Do not attempt to crimp or bend the pipe (static electricity is present).
- Do NOT attempt to shut off any pipeline valves.
- Wait for emergency responders and Avista to arrive.

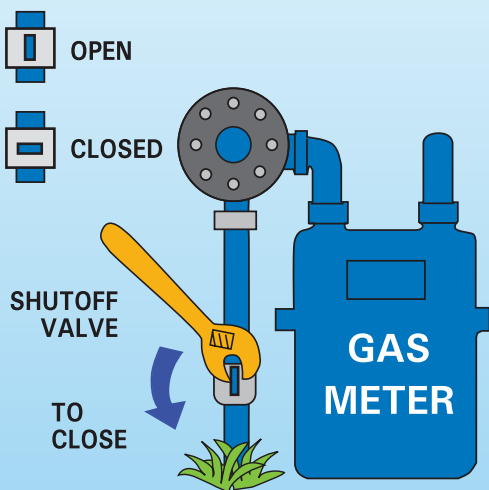
## Natural disasters

In major emergencies, such as an earthquake or flood, you should know how to shut off your home's natural gas service. Using a large wrench, give the valve on the meter a quarter turn in either direction. When the valve runs crossways to the pipe, the line is closed. Only turn off your gas if you smell or hear a gas leak, or if your residence sustains major damage.

**Never turn the gas back on yourself.** Report the issue by calling Avista Customer Service at **800-227-9187**. A service tech will come restore your service and relight your gas appliances. Avista will implement our emergency plan to ensure the safety of affected areas.

If a storm exposes your natural gas lines due to flooding or high winds (e.g., when a tree is ripped up by the roots), please contact Avista.

NOTE: Avista does not install earthquake valves, which go on the "customer side" of the meter. These can be optionally installed by a qualified plumber of your choice.



## Natural gas safety checklist

To help prevent accidents in your home and keep your family safe, follow these general tips:

### Indoors

- Have a qualified technician periodically inspect your natural gas appliances to ensure they are operating correctly and are properly vented.
- Clear the area around your furnace and water heater. Keep all items a minimum of 5 feet away.
- Remove all combustible liquids and materials that are stored near gas appliances.
- Instruct children to stay away from gas-burning appliances and to not swing from gas lines or play on meters.
- Clean your natural gas range and oven to avoid grease fires.
- Purchase carbon monoxide detectors for every floor and install according to manufacturer's directions.

### Outdoors

- Keep dirt or debris from collecting under or around your gas meter to prevent corrosion and leaks.
- Keep shrubs and vegetation at least 2 feet away from the meter to allow our crews access.
- Clear away snow and ice from the meter during winter months.
- Make sure no objects are placed on or against the meter. (No animals should be tied to it either.)
- Make sure your meter is protected from possible vehicle collisions.
- Call 811 **at least two full business days** before you dig to have underground utilities marked.
- Call Avista before you or a professional attempt to unblock a sewer drain.
- Identify the gas valve on your gas meter in the event you need to shut off your natural gas during a major emergency. (Make sure you keep a large enough wrench at home.)

NOTE: An earthquake survival tool that is specifically made to shut off the gas valve can be purchased at most hardware stores. The cost is typically under \$5.

## Call 811 before you dig

Anyone who plans to break ground with a shovel, auger or excavating equipment must call 811 at least **two full business days** before you dig—it's the law. An expert representing your utility and other service providers will come mark the approximate location of all buried lines that are owned by them. This service is free; however, privately owned lines are not included (see illustration). The property owner will need to hire a private utility locator to find and mark these lines, which does cost a fee.

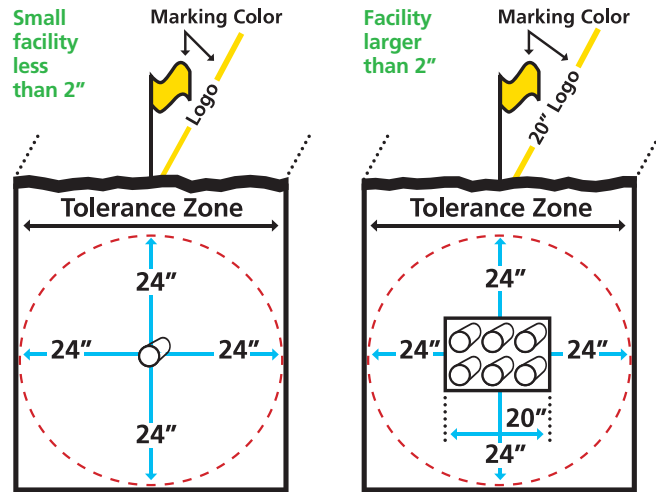
## Call 811 before you dig checklist

**Never disturb the ground until you complete these steps:**

- Use white paint or wooden stakes to mark the entire area where you plan to dig. (Use pink paint if the area is covered by snow.)
- Call 811 and wait for all utility representatives listed on your locate ticket to mark their facilities.
- Maintain and respect these locate marks/flags.

- Verify that the "Work to Begin Date and Time" is valid on your 811 locate ticket. If your locate ticket expires, you must call in for a new locate.
- Begin by hand digging within a 24-inch tolerance zone to expose the marked/flagged utility (required by 811 law). See below.

## Hand dig within 24"

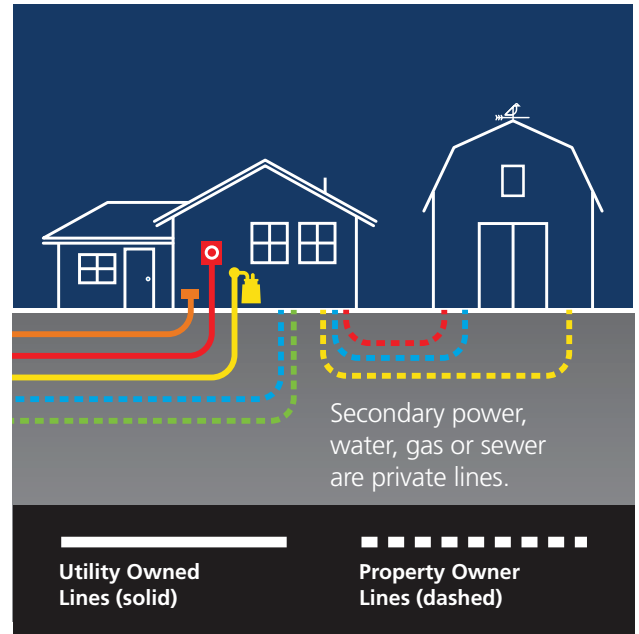


The property owner must hire a private utility locator to locate underground lines on private property. Private lines are maintained by the property owner and not the utility or service provider.

Primary power and gas will be marked by the utilities.

Water lines from the meter, and sewer from the street to the house, are private lines.

■ Phone/Cable     ■ Gas     ■ Water  
■ Electric     ■ Sewer







Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.

## Ground mark identification

Ground markings are in different colors to indicate the proximate locations and types of utility facilities buried below. Valid timeframes for locate tickets:

WA - 45 days

ID - 21 days

OR - 45 days

If anyone digs after the listed times, they are digging with an expired ticket and the person excavating could be liable for damage costs.

ELECTRIC: RED
GAS-OIL: YELLOW
COMMUNICATION: ORANGE
WATER: BLUE
SEWER: GREEN
TEMPORARY SURVEY: PINK
IRRIGATION: PURPLE
PROPOSED EXCAVATION: WHITE

## If you damage a line

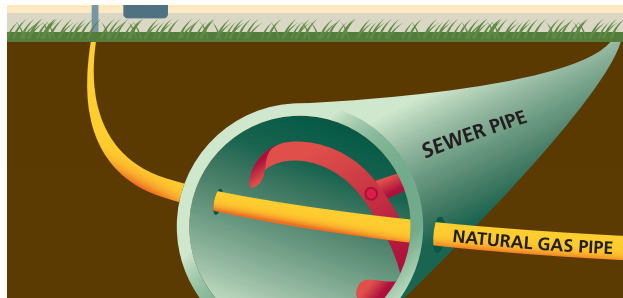
- If you nick or otherwise damage a natural gas line, immediately notify Avista customer service at **800-227-9187**.
- If you damage a pipeline and natural gas is escaping, DO NOT FOLD OVER THE PIPE to stop the leak. This can cause a static charge that can ignite the gas. Walk upwind a safe distance away, then call 911 and Avista.

## Pipeline Vandalism

If you witness someone tampering with a natural gas pipeline or facility, call 911 right away. Afterwards, call Avista as soon as possible at **800-227-9187**.

## Never build over natural gas lines

Never build any type of structure over buried utility lines or where it will block access to meters. Doing so runs a serious safety risk and prevents Avista from maintaining the infrastructure that serves customers. Sheds, garages and other structures constructed overtop underground utilities often must be removed at the customer's expense. Never begin construction before calling 811 to have utilities marked first.



## Unblocking a sewer

On rare occasions, buried natural gas lines have unintentionally been installed through undetected sewer pipes. These natural gas lines are safe unless severed by a sewer-clearing tool, which could cause a gas leak and lead to a fire or explosion. Before clearing a blocked sewer, call Avista. We'll send out a technician (or crew, if needed) at no cost to make necessary repairs and ensure it is safe.

## Excess flow valve

An excess flow valve (EFV) is a device that automatically restricts the flow of natural gas if an underground pipeline is punctured or severed from excavation. Since 2008, EFVs have been installed on most new or replaced natural gas customer service lines. Existing natural gas customers without an EFV on their natural gas service may elect to have one installed at the **customer's expense**. For more information, visit [myavista.com/resngsafety](http://myavista.com/resngsafety).

## General pipeline markers (Not a substitute for calling 811)

Some of Avista's major distribution pipelines for natural gas have aboveground yellow markers along their routes, each displaying a 24-hour emergency response phone number. THESE YELLOW MARKERS ONLY INDICATE THE PRESENCE OF BURIED NATURAL GAS LINES and may not be posted above the actual pipelines. You are still required by law to have pipelines located and marked by calling 811 at least two business days before you dig. Transmission pipeline maps by county and zip code that show the names of pipeline operators are available by registering at [www.npms.phmsa.dot.gov](http://www.npms.phmsa.dot.gov).



## Safety matters

Avista wants to keep everyone safe. If your dwelling has occupants or tenants, keep them informed by asking us for more brochures. For additional information, visit **myavista.com** or call **800-227-9187**.

View helpful safety videos at:  
**myavista.com/safetyvideos.**

Если Вы хотели бы получить информацию о правилах безопасности на русском языке, пожалуйста звоните по телефону 800-227-9187.

Si desea recibir información en Español acerca de la seguridad, por favor llamar a: 800-227-9187.

For assistance with alternative languages, please call 800-227-9187.

Avista  
Public Safety Dept.  
P.O. Box 3727  
Spokane, WA 99220-3727  
publicsafety@avistacorp.com

