

Mainlines

DECEMBER 2009 / JANUARY 2010

A newsletter for the customers of the Holyoke Gas & Electric Department

Protect your family from the dangers of Carbon Monoxide

Whether you heat your home with oil, natural gas, propane, coal or wood, your heating system can produce carbon monoxide (CO) if it is not working properly, or if it is inadequately vented. CO is also produced from internal combustion devices such as cars and small gasoline engines. Carbon monoxide is odorless, colorless and tasteless, but very toxic. Signs indicating the presence of carbon monoxide in the home include stuffy, stale or smelly air, very high humidity or soot coming from a fireplace or heating system.

What are the symptoms of CO poisoning?

The symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are often confused with those of the flu, and the highest incidence of poisoning occurs during the flu season.

Symptoms include headaches, dizziness, nausea, unclear thinking, shortness of breath, weakness, vision problems and loss of muscle control. High concentrations of carbon monoxide can lead to unconsciousness, brain damage or death. However, a victim may not experience **ANY** of these symptoms, or only one or a few symptoms. You should suspect the presence of carbon monoxide if symptoms tend to disappear when you leave your home.

What should you do if you suspect the presence of Carbon Monoxide in your home?

- ▶ Open the windows and doors immediately.
- ▶ Contact HG&E at 536-9335 (24-hours a day) or a licensed heating contractor immediately for an emergency inspection.
- ▶ If carbon monoxide is detected in your home, seek medical attention immediately.

This important safety information has been prepared by the Northeast Gas Association.

Happy holidays!

Your December bill reflects an **extra 10% holiday discount on gas and electric services**, granted by the Holyoke Gas & Electric Department Commission. This discount does not apply to customers who are participating in an economic development incentive offer.

Economic development incentives include the First-Time Homeowner program, the Economic Development discount program and Large Industrial Contract Rate customers. Bills must be paid by discount date to receive discounts.



New Dropbox Location:

There is now a payment drop box located at the DB Mart at 494 Westfield Road in Holyoke.


Payments made at HG&E drop boxes are credited to your account the next business day.

Locations of HG&E Payment Drop Boxes:

- CVS/Pharmacy, 400 Beech Street, 536-1432
- Stop & Shop, 28 Lincoln Street, 536-1247
- Stop & Shop, 2265 Northampton St, 536-9287
- Wally's BP Shop, 297 Apremont Highway, 533-1631
- DB Mart, 494 Westfield Road, 533-4577
- C-Mart, 1500 Northampton St, 536-2372


Electric Rate Comparison

December 2009 - Residential customer consuming 500 kwh per month. Amounts shown include all discounts and use the fixed default generation supply price.

HG&E	\$53.83	 includes an extra 10% holiday discount !
National Grid	+	33.9%
serving Northampton		\$72.35
Western Mass Electric	+	45.3%
serving Springfield		\$78.53

Natural Gas Rate Comparison

Average Winter Bill - November 2009 - April 2010
Residential customer consuming 179 CCF/month. (1376 CCF Annual Consumption) Amounts shown include all discounts.

HG&E	\$230.97	 includes an extra 10% holiday discount !
Berkshire Gas	+	2.4%
serving Pittsfield		\$236.48
Baystate Gas	+	4.2%
serving Springfield		\$240.56

Natural Gas Pipeline Safety: What you need to know.

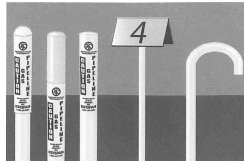
Esta es una información importante de seguridad. Por favor, hágala traducir.

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. 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.

Like all forms of energy, natural gas must be handled properly. Despite an excellent safety record, a gas leak caused by damage to a pipeline may pose a hazard and has the potential to ignite.

Since pipelines are underground, line markers are sometimes used to indicate their approximate location. The markers display the name of the pipeline operator and the telephone number where the operator can be reached in the event of an emergency.

Whether you are a natural gas customer or not, it is important for you to be familiar with the characteristics of natural gas and be prepared to react quickly and properly to ensure your safety and the safety of others.



Examples of Common Pipeline Markers
(not all pipelines are marked)

Using Your Senses

A gas leak is often 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. You may also see vegetation that appears to be dead or dying for no apparent reason.

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** us immediately at (413) 536-9335
- ▶ **DO NOT** smoke or operate electrical switches or appliances. These items may produce a spark that might ignite the gas and cause an explosion.
- ▶ Provide the exact location, including cross streets.
- ▶ Let us know if sewer construction or digging activities are going on in the area.

Know What You're Digging Into

The greatest risk to underground natural gas pipelines is accidental damage during excavation. Excavation damage accounts for almost 60% of all reported pipeline incidents. 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 the local One Call Center at 888-DIG-SAFE or the new national phone number 811 before excavation work begins on public or private property. Whether you are a do-it-yourself home owner or a professional excavator, every job requires a phone call. The One Call Center will contact the gas utility operator of underground facilities in the immediate area so the location of pipelines can be marked prior to excavation. This service is preformed 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. The One Call Center can provide an excavator 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.

Our Commitment to Safety

Safety is the natural gas industry's top priority. The industry spends more than \$6 Billion each year to maintain the gas distribution system's excellent safety record. We work with industry and peer groups to continually enhance our 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 safe and secure delivery of natural gas.

The natural gas industry works very closely with industry and government agencies on a variety of measures used to ensure pipeline safety including:

- Coordination with local One Call Centers
- Visual inspection programs
- Design and construction techniques
- Workforce training
- Industry safety practices and government oversight
- Pipeline markers and facility mapping
- Public education programs

And the industry works 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.

Helpful Resources

Additional information can be obtained through the following organizations:

- National Pipeline Mapping System (www.npms.phmsa.dot.gov)
- Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (primis.phmsa.dot.gov/comm/generalpublic.htm)
- Common Ground Alliance (www.commongroundalliance.com)
- National "Call Before You Dig" Organization (www.call811.com)
- National Association of State Fire Marshals (www.firemarshals.org)
- Northeast Gas Association (www.northeastgas.org)
- American Gas Association (www.aga.org)



visit our website at :
www.hged.com/digsafe

**To report a gas leak call:
(413) 536-9335**

Before digging or excavation call toll-free to:
(888) DIG-SAFE
to have the location of your gas lines marked

