

# Gas Leaks



Natural gas is generally a very safe heating fuel, but all equipment needs to be maintained and can sometimes fail. Knowing how to detect a gas leak and what to do when you discover one can save lives.

**Signs of a Leak:** Natural gas has an odorant added to it that smells like rotten eggs. This is done to make sure we take notice of the bad smell and realize that something is wrong. Some other signs of a leak are a hissing, whistling, or roaring sound coming from underground or a gas appliance, continuous bubbling in a source of standing water, or dead or dying vegetation in an otherwise moist area. These are good indicators that there is a gas leak, and you should take immediate action.

**What To Do:** When you suspect a gas leak, alert the entire building and move all occupants outside and upwind. Call your gas company and emergency services right away. Do not try to shut off the gas valve, as this may cause a spark. Avoid doing anything that may cause a spark in the building – leave the lights as they are, do not plug or unplug anything, and don't use your cell phone until you are outside. Monitor everyone for things like nausea, dizziness, headaches, and difficulty breathing. If anyone is experiencing these symptoms, call for medical attention right away. Do not allow anyone back into the building until the leak has been repaired and the gas company has declared it safe.

**Plan Ahead:** Gas leaks should be included in your emergency response plans and training. After an incident, make sure to review your plan and update it as needed.

When I was in high school, and our building was under construction, we were evacuated one day because of a suspected gas leak. As it turned out, someone left a window open in the attic, and the fresh air in our school was out of the norm. As humorous as being evacuated for a fresh air leak is, I am grateful that whoever initiated that evacuation was aware that something was different and felt empowered enough to speak up. It is better to err on the side of safety than not say something and have a tragedy happen. So, remember, "See something, say something," or in this case, "Smell something, say something."

~ Charlie Taylor, Safety and Security Expert

