



Natural gas leaks: Can you detect them?

 Natural gas leaks can lead to catastrophic fires and explosions. Learning to recognize the signs of a gas leak will help you protect yourself, your team and the community you serve.



Don't rely on your nose alone!

National Grid adds an odorant called mercaptan to natural gas to make it smell like sulfur or rotten eggs. Although this odor often aids in detection of gas leaks, you may not be able to smell it if you have been exposed to the odor for too long, if the odor is masked by other smells, or if soil conditions or other factors have stripped the odorant from the gas. Additionally, the gas in some transmission pipelines is not odorized.

So never rely on your nose alone to detect a natural gas leak. Train your senses of sight and hearing to identify signs of leaking gas.

Be alert for risks posed to nearby plastic gas pipes or cast iron mains. Underground fires or releases of high-pressure steam may compromise these pipes. In either case, natural gas may accumulate underground at flammable concentrations. Collaborate with National Grid emergency representatives to identify areas served by plastic pipes and cast iron mains.

LOOK and LISTEN for these signs of a gas leak:

- A hissing, whistling or roaring sound
- Dirt spraying or blowing into the air
- Continuous bubbling in water
- Dead or dying vegetation (in an otherwise moist area) over or near a gas pipeline
- A damaged connection to a gas appliance
- An exposed pipeline after a fire, earthquake, flood or other disaster

Confirm suspected leaks

When responding to a suspected gas leak, always wear PPE and SCBA. If you have been trained to do so, use a combustible gas indicator (CGI) to confirm a gas leak and whether it poses an explosion risk. Before entering a building, assess the hazard level around the building as well as nearby buildings. **Never enter a building unless gas concentrations are well below the lower explosive limit of 5 percent gas in air.**

Any tiny spark can ignite leaking gas, so take these precautions:

- Eliminate open flames, cigarettes (including e-cigarettes or vape pens) and spark-producing equipment. Use only intrinsically safe radios and flashlights.
- Do not use doorbells, garage door openers, light switches or appliances.
- Do not step on doormats or shuffle across carpet. Friction from boots could create a spark of static electricity.

For more first responder safety information, visit firstresponder.ngridsafety.com.
To report emergencies, call 911 and National Grid immediately.