

# Natural Gas Safety

## South Alabama Utilities

Natural Gas is one of the cleanest, most efficient fuels used for the heating of homes and water, food preparation, in manufacturing processes and even to generate electricity. Natural gas is delivered to your home through a system of cross country and local pipelines. South Alabama Utilities takes our commitment of delivering safe, reliable natural gas seriously.

Your safety is important to us and this information is designed to provide you and your family with important safety information about natural gas that you should know about.

In the event of a natural disaster like hurricane, earthquake, flood, tornado, storm or similar events special precautions may be necessary. If your home suffers structural damage and you smell or hear the sound of escaping gas, immediately evacuate the premises, and then call 911 and SAU. Do not attempt to relight any appliance or pilot lights. Restoration of gas service will be performed by qualified SAU service personnel when it is safe to do so.

### Recognizing a Suspected Leak...

Pure natural gas is colorless and odorless. Before the gas is delivered to your home, an odorant called mercaptan is added to give gas its distinctive odor so you can smell a leak immediately. Mercaptan makes the gas smell like sulphur or "rotten eggs". Using your sense of sight, smell and sound will help you recognize a suspected leak. Here's what you should look for:

#### • Sight

A dense fog, mist or white cloud. Vapor and "ground frosting" may be visible at high pressures. A gas leak may also be indicated by bubbles in wet or flooded areas, distinct patches of dead vegetation, dust blowing from a hole in the ground or flames if the leak is ignited.

#### • Smell

A distinctive odorant called mercaptan is added to natural gas, which is colorless and odorless, to give it a distinctive odor which will be like a sulphur or "rotten egg" smell. If the gas is from an underground leak, the odorant may be filtered out by the ground. If you smell a faint gas odor near an appliance make sure all pilot lights are lit; if you find a pilot light extinguished, open windows and doors to vent the area; then wait 15 minutes before relighting the pilot light. If the odor persists, call SAU's Citronelle office (251) 866-2365 or Semmes office (251) 649-4316.

#### • Sound

If you smell gas inside your home or business and the smell is a strong, persistent natural gas odor, or you hear a hissing, whistling or roaring noise leave the building immediately, taking everyone with you (including pets), and leave all doors and windows open behind you and contact SAU from a neighbor's home or nearby business.

#### • Outdoor Gas Leak

If you hit a gas line while digging, smell a strong gas odor in the air, see or hear any unusual occurrences such as a whistle or hissing sound, blowing dust, dead vegetation, continuous bubbles in an underwater area, ground fires, or if you see house flies swarming and a large amount dead, you may be observing signs of a leak in a natural gas line. Always use caution near an outdoor gas leak and recognize the possible hazards, such as fire, ignition or explosion.

### In these conditions:

Notify SAU immediately, then call 911, local fire, police or sheriff's department if there appears to be an immediate danger. Evacuate the area and move to a safe place and try to prevent anyone from entering.

- **DO NOT** touch, breathe or make contact with the leak.
- **DO NOT** use telephones, cellular phones, computers, appliances, turn light switch on/off, elevators or garage door openers or any device that could generate a spark or a flame.
- **DO NOT** touch electrical outlets, switches or doorbells.
- **DO NOT** smoke, use a lighter, match or other open flame.
- **DO NOT** position or operate vehicles, start up or shut down a vehicle or powered equipment where leaking may be present. Abandon any equipment being used in or near the area.
- **DO NOT** re-enter home to open doors or windows.
- **DO NOT** attempt to repair or backfill any damaged or potentially damaged pipeline.
- **DO NOT** attempt to extinguish any fires.
- **DO NOT** attempt to operate any valves.

### Call Before You Dig, Ensure Your Safety...

The leading cause of damage to buried pipelines is the failure to call and obtain the pipelines' exact location. Damage to pipelines – such as a scratch, gouge, crease or dent - may cause a leak.

Before you start any excavation activity on your property, you are required by state law to call the One-Call Notification Center at 811. Natural gas operators will mark the location of their lines at no cost to you.

Excavation activities can be as simple as planting a tree, installing landscaping, building a fence or installing a swimming pool.

Be safe, and remember to call before you dig! Contact 811 before performing any excavation activities on your property.

### Contact the natural gas operator

- Contact South Alabama Utilities gas operator as quickly as possible.
- Pipeline markers provide the company name, phone number and product.
- Do not operate any valves; this action could escalate the emergency.
- The natural gas operator will dispatch personnel to help and aid the response to the emergency.
- The natural gas operator's personnel will take the necessary actions, such as starting and stopping pumps, opening or closing valves, and similar steps to minimize the impact of the situation.

### The Safety Commitment...

South Alabama Utilities is committed to protecting you, your property and the environment. These safety guidelines will provide you with important information to help you avoid dangerous activities that could lead to a gas leak.

Pipeline markers are another important safety precaution. Since pipelines are buried underground, pipeline markers are used to help in their identification. Pipeline markers are found where a pipeline intersects a street, highway or railway. Be aware of any pipeline markers in your neighborhood. Write down the natural gas operator's name and phone number in case of an emergency. While markers are helpful, they provide very limited information.

### Markers show:

- The approximate location of the pipelines but not the depth or number of pipes.
- The product transported.
- The natural gas operator and emergency phone numbers

### Carbon Monoxide Information you should know

Carbon Monoxide is a silent killer that can lurk within fossil fuel burning household appliances. Many types of equipment and appliances burn different types of fuel to provide heat, cook, generate electricity, power vehicles and various tools, such as chainsaws, weed eaters and leaf blowers. Carbon Monoxide can be lethal when accidentally inhaled in concentrated doses, also known as Carbon Monoxide poisoning. This is a serious condition that is a medical emergency and should be taken care of right away.

### Signs and Symptoms of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

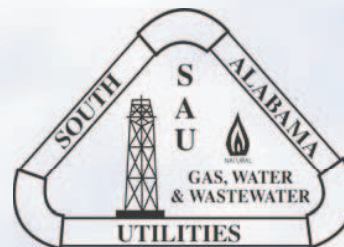
- Weakness
- Dull Headache
- Nausea and vomiting
- Dizziness
- Confusion
- Chest pain
- Paranoia or erratic mood swings
- Impaired judgment and irritability
- In worst cases, loss of consciousness and death

### Prevention

- Keep your garage well ventilated
- Never start your car in an enclosed garage space
- Conduct periodic checks of your household heaters and gas appliances
- Follow the instruction manual on proper operation of gas-fueled machinery
- Invest in a carbon monoxide detector
- Keep your house well ventilated

### Office Locations

South Alabama Utilities has offices in Citronelle and Semmes Alabama. The Citronelle office is located at 8100 Joy Street; the emergency phone number is 251-866-2365. The Semmes office is located at 4800 McCrary Road; the emergency phone number is 251-649-4316.



## 24 Hour Emergency Numbers

**Semmes: 251-649-4316**

4800 McCrary Rd., P.O. Box 319, Semmes, AL 36575

**Citronelle: 251-866-2365**

8100 Joy Street, P.O. Box 428, Citronelle, AL 36522

[www.southalabamautilities.net](http://www.southalabamautilities.net)

