



# NATURAL GAS PIPELINE SAFETY

INFORMATION FOR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

**Consumers Energy**

*Count on Us®*

# Pipeline Safety in Your Community

**We** WANT TO MAKE sure you are aware of our continuing efforts to keep your community safe and how you can play a role.

Knowing the signs of a gas leak, promoting safe digging and helping enforce proper land use near pipelines all go a long way to keep your community safe.

Please take a few minutes to review this information and share it within your organization, especially planning and zoning commissions.

Consumers Energy provides natural gas service to more than 1.7 million Michigan customers. To help keep gas flowing to homes and businesses, we operate and maintain multiple natural gas storage fields along with compressor stations to pressurize

the gas so it moves quickly through our 28,000 miles of pipelines. Then, we reduce the pressure in regulating facilities so the gas can be efficiently used for cooking, heating and other purposes.

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, pipelines are the safest, most reliable and cost effective means of transporting energy products, such as natural gas, over long distances. As one of the state's largest natural gas companies, we take our job of ensuring pipeline safety very seriously.



## Pipeline Safety Programs

We have many programs in place to maintain the safety of our natural gas system, especially in densely populated areas or places where people congregate such as schools, parks and campgrounds. The federal government sets standards for the development of integrity management programs specifically near these High Consequence Areas. Some of our many safety programs include:

- All pipe is factory-tested to ensure it meets our safety standards
- Our cathodic protection program uses a low-voltage electric current to help reduce or eliminate corrosion
- We use high-tech devices called “smart pigs” to locate any breaks in the pipe’s protective wrap, dents or small internal weaknesses
- We conduct ground and aerial surveys to check our 2,550 miles of transmission pipelines at least twice a year
- We respond to more than 300,000 MISS DIG requests each year to mark pipeline locations so excavators can dig safely
- To allow us to respond quickly to any emergency, our employees continuously monitor a computer system that alerts us to any abnormal pressures or flows in the gas system
- Field employees receive extensive training to maintain pipelines and respond to any possible problem
- We respond promptly to all gas emergency calls to make the situation safe as soon as possible and to mitigate the impact of an incident involving natural gas



- We also count on the awareness of those living and working near pipelines to inform us of unusual activities and have an extensive pipeline public awareness program

## Pipelines in Your Area

The National Pipeline Mapping System (NPMS) provides maps of interstate and intrastate transmission pipelines for natural gas, oil and other products, along with contact information of the pipeline operator.

To find out who operates transmission pipelines in your area, visit [www.npms.phmsa.dot.gov](http://www.npms.phmsa.dot.gov).

Additionally, Consumers Energy maintains an Emergency Officials online web portal (for public sector first responders) which provides resources including Consumers Energy system maps, public safety bulletins and online hazard awareness videos. To learn more about the location of these facilities, please contact your local emergency official or email [publicsafety@cmsenergy.com](mailto:publicsafety@cmsenergy.com).

## Natural Gas Pipeline Markers

Since high-pressure pipelines are buried and out of sight, we've posted important warning signs above ground. The route of an underground pipeline is identified with above-ground pipeline markers; however markers do not indicate the pipeline's exact location, its depth or the direction it follows.

Pipeline markers are located at road, railroad and waterway crossings and at regular intervals across agricultural areas. They are yellow signs that identify the company, type of pipeline and provide an emergency phone number.

Aerial pipeline markers approximately every four miles enable our pipeline aerial patrols to follow the route and detect soil erosion, heavy equipment working or digging in the area, or other situations requiring immediate action.



## Pipeline Corridors

Consumers Energy pipeline corridors are located on both company-owned land and rights of way (easements) obtained from other landowners. Pipeline corridors must be kept free of trees, buildings or other structures to help ensure we deliver safe, reliable energy to Michigan homes and businesses. For public safety, the following guidelines should be observed on all pipeline corridors:

- Structures, such as buildings, sheds and swimming pools are NOT allowed in the corridor
- Underground facilities, such as drain tiles, culverts, electric cables, septic systems, water wells, etc. should NOT be constructed in the corridor
- No soil is to be added or removed over the pipeline
- No roads should be constructed over or across pipelines without first consulting with the pipeline owner
- No trees or shrubs should be planted in the corridor
- No blasting should be conducted in the corridor

## Land Development Guidelines

Obstruction-free corridors help us to safely deliver natural gas to our customers. As a local official, we ask you to also consider taking additional steps to promote safety near pipelines, such as establishing construction and land development guidelines. These could include:

- Requiring the consent of easement holders as a condition of issuing permits for construction and/or development

## Natural Gas Hazards

We work hard to maintain a safe gas system. However, if not addressed quickly, natural gas leaks could cause fire and/or explosions. Asphyxiation could also result because natural gas can displace oxygen in confined spaces.

### GAS LEAKS CAN BE CAUSED BY:

- Excavating accidents that result in the rupture, nicking or puncturing of a pipeline
- Placing extremely heavy materials or equipment over buried pipelines, such as soil piles, heavy equipment, outriggers etc.
- Water main breaks that weaken roadways and pavement can result in damaged pipelines
- Excess accumulation of snow and ice on meters, gas pipes and gas appliance exhaust and combustion air vents. Exercise care when removing snow and ice
- Collapsed buildings that break or damage gas pipelines
- Fire or explosion near a pipeline
- Too much, or not enough pressure in the gas system
- Equipment failure or corrosion
- Natural disasters such as floods, tornadoes or earthquakes



## Important Natural Gas Safety Facts

### DETECTING NATURAL GAS LEAKS

- Natural gas is naturally colorless, tasteless, odorless and nontoxic
- A “rotten egg” odor is added to natural gas before delivery to your home so gas leaks can be detected quickly, without special equipment
- Natural gas in most large transmission pipelines has not had odorant added yet

### GAS FLAMMABILITY

- To burn, natural gas must be mixed with air and have access to an ignition source
- Ignition sources can be anything with an open flame like pilot lights, matches, stoves or ovens. Ignition sources also include most things with an on/off switch such as indoor lights, cell phones, car motors, garage door openers, etc.
- If natural gas does ignite, do not attempt to put out the flame. Burning natural gas will not explode

### NATURAL GAS IS NOT LPG

- Liquefied petroleum gases (LPG), such as propane, are different than natural gas. They are heavier than air and collect in low places. Natural gas is almost 40 percent lighter than air and will rise and eventually dissipate if outside or in open, ventilated spaces

- Require pipeline operator involvement in road widening, grading, mining, blasting, or dredging and other activity that may impact the safe operation of the pipeline
- Request residents, excavators and land developers to contact the pipeline operator regarding questions about the pipeline or pipeline corridor

**Local governments should encourage residents applying for building permits to call 8-1-1 to avoid dangerous and costly damage to gas pipes.**

## Using Consumers Energy’s Land

Land owned by Consumers Energy is private property and not open for public use without permission. Sometimes the company may give specific permission to adjoining landowners and others to use its property through a lease, license, permit or easement.

For information on obtaining a lease, license, permit or easement call the Consumers Energy operations planning center at 888-253-4782.

## Involve Consumers Energy in Project Planning

Local public officials are encouraged to involve Consumers Energy representatives when planning major infrastructure projects such as for roads and water and sewer systems.

Involving our team early in the planning process can help avoid conflicts with existing gas mains and other gas facilities. We can provide project designers with drawings to indicate existing underground facilities during planning and design phases. This helps ensure unexpected conflicts with gas facilities are eliminated and utility facility relocations are minimized. This coordination should continue through the construction stages to avoid costly and dangerous damages to pipelines.

One way to initiate this coordination is through the MISS DIG Design Ticket process. Designers and engineers of civic improvement projects can use this process to make sure they are aware of underground facilities in the project areas, and to initiate communications with Consumers Energy and other underground facility owners. Get information on Design Tickets at [missdig.org](http://missdig.org).



## SAFETY REMINDER

Road construction and municipal utility projects may require coordination with our damage prevention staff to ensure a job is completed safely.

**For more information, email:**  
[publicsafety@cmsenergy.com](mailto:publicsafety@cmsenergy.com)



## Safe Digging

A major cause of leaks is damage from someone accidentally striking an underground pipeline. This is a serious safety threat and can lead to personal harm, physical damages and financial loss.

Local governments can help protect employee and public safety by promoting damage prevention best practices, especially contacting MISS DIG by calling 8-1-1 or going online at [missdig.org](http://missdig.org) at least three days before digging to have underground facilities marked.

MISS DIG is a free service that will contact utility companies to have underground lines marked with stakes, flags or paint. Residents and employees should contact 8-1-1 even for routine jobs such as planting shrubs or trees, replacing a mailbox post or installing a fence or deck.

Public Act 174 requires municipalities operating underground utilities (water, sewer, electric, etc.) in public right of way to be members of MISS DIG so they can protect their underground facilities.

Underground facilities belonging to the property owner such as electric lines to yard lights, underground sprinklers, and gas lines



**Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.**

### SAFETY REMINDER

Once underground facilities are marked:

- Avoid digging within four feet of marks
- Use hand tools to expose buried utility lines before using power equipment within four feet of marks
- Call Consumers Energy immediately if you believe you may have hit or nicked a natural gas line



to barbecue grills will not be staked by utilities responding to a MISS DIG request. Residents are responsible for marking these lines. Contractors are available who can provide this staking service for a fee.

Consumers Energy uses yellow stakes, flags or paint to identify the location of natural gas pipelines before the start of a digging project.

## Farm Safety

If agricultural or farming activities in your community include deep plowing, fence post installation, trenching, leveling, installing drain tile, sub soiling or other excavation work, it's vital to contact 8-1-1 three working days before starting any digging. A representative will mark underground lines at no cost.

## Communications with Emergency Officials

Consumers Energy regularly responds with local emergency officials to incidents involving natural gas, such as structure fires or gas leaks. We contact police and fire departments annually, through mailings or personal contacts, to offer training and share safety and response information.

### FREE Damage Prevention and Contractor Safety Education

**Contact our team to discuss safe digging practices to help reduce damages and prevent costly safety incidents.**

**Email: [publicsafety@cmsenergy.com](mailto:publicsafety@cmsenergy.com)**



### SAFETY REMINDER

Questions or first responder training requests can be made to our public safety outreach team at [publicsafety@cmsenergy.com](mailto:publicsafety@cmsenergy.com)

# The 3 Rs of Natural Gas Safety

Knowing how to recognize, react and report natural gas emergencies can help keep you and your community safe.



## 1. RECOGNIZE:

Signs of a natural gas leak may include:

- “Rotten egg” smell
- Blowing or hissing sound
- Dead or discolored vegetation in an otherwise green area
- Dirt or dust blowing from a hole in the ground
- Bubbling in wet or flooded areas
- Flames, if a leak has ignited

Consumers Energy also may operate high-pressure transmission pipelines in your area. Signs of a natural gas pipeline leak could include any of the above, except the “rotten egg” odor



## 2. REACT:

- Leave the area immediately, without using anything that could ignite the natural gas
- Do not use any electrical device, such as light switches, telephones /cell phones, garage door openers
- Do not use an open flame, matches or lighters
- Do not try to locate the source of the gas leak
- Do not try to shut off any natural gas valves or gas appliances
- Do not start vehicles
- Do not re-enter the building or return to the area until our employee says it’s safe to do so



## 3. REPORT:

- Go to a safe location
- Then call **9-1-1** and Consumers Energy at **800-477-5050**, any time day or night

- **We’ll respond 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at no charge.**
- **Responderemos a su emergencia las 24 horas del día, 7 días por semana sin costo alguno.**

## SAFETY REMINDER

Many natural gas leaks are caused by damage to pipelines.

If you hit a gas pipeline, call Consumers Energy toll-free at:

**800-477-5050**, even if there is no apparent damage.





## For more information

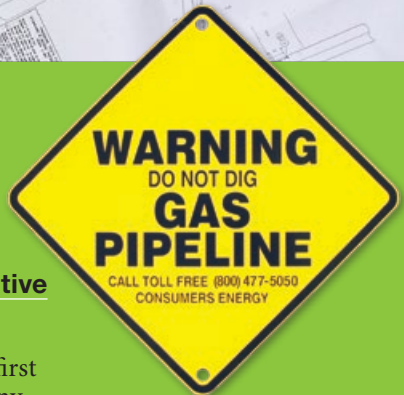
- ▶ [Consumers Energy 800-477-5050](tel:800-477-5050)
- ▶ [ConsumersEnergy.com/safety](http://ConsumersEnergy.com/safety)
- ▶ [missdig.org](http://missdig.org)
- ▶ [Your local Public Affairs Representative](#)
- ▶ [publicsafety@cmsenergy.com](mailto:publicsafety@cmsenergy.com)

Our public affairs area manager will be your first point of contact at Consumers Energy for many community questions and concerns.

If you do not know your local public affairs contact, please email [publicsafety@cmsenergy.com](mailto:publicsafety@cmsenergy.com) and we will schedule an introduction.

## WORKING TOGETHER FOR SAFER COMMUNITIES.

THAT'S OUR PROMISE TO MICHIGAN.



**Consumers Energy**

*Count on Us®*

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