

Being safe with natural gas

Natural gas is a brilliant fuel as it's quick and efficient. However, as with any fuel, there are some safety issues to be aware of.

Natural gas is actually odorless! However, we add the cabbage-breath smell to make sure everyone really knows when there is even the tiniest leak. If there are any leaks you'll need to deal with it immediately as natural gas is both explosive and poisonous. Here are a few tips to help you avoid things going wrong.

Give yourself plenty of room to breath

Carbon monoxide is a very poisonous gas that has no colour or odour. It can cause headaches, nausea and dizziness or even death. To prevent carbon monoxide poisoning, your gas appliance must be well ventilated and placed in an area with a good flow of air around it.

Normally, gas combines with oxygen to produce heat – which is good. However, if a gas appliance is not working properly, the oxygen supply might be restricted and produce large amounts of carbon monoxide – which is bad.

So, never use a gas appliance in confined spaces such as bedrooms, bathrooms or combined living and sleeping quarters, unless it has a flue and it draws its air intake from outside the space it operates in.

Unflued appliances must not be used in small confined spaces. This is especially important for a continuous flow water heater (califont) installation in a bathroom. If you have an existing appliance in a confined space that does not have a flue and does not draw its air intake from outside the space it operates in, it should be checked by a licensed gasfitter.

Keep your gas appliance well maintained

Lack of maintenance or missing parts in your gas appliance may also cause carbon monoxide production. It may also cause a fire. To reduce fire risk you should regularly vacuum or dust around the burner on your gas appliance

(remembering to turn off the appliance first). Make sure you get it checked by a licensed gasfitter at least every two years, or as often as the manufacturer recommends. Also, make sure you read the manufacturer's operating and maintenance instructions and keep them in a safe place.

Your gas appliance burners should light completely and rapidly. If your appliance does not light the first time, wait a few moments as there is a risk that unburned gas may build up and ignite in an uncontrolled manner (the singed eyebrows is never a good look). If you try again and it still fails to light you should have the appliance checked by a licensed gasfitter (who should hopefully have thick and lustrous eyebrows).

If your gas appliance has an unpleasant smell, produces soot or has a yellow flame instead of a blue one, carbon monoxide may be present. Call a licensed gasfitter straight away.

What to do if you smell gas

Gas leaks are dangerous if not investigated and resolved immediately. If you own a gas appliance, you should be familiar with the smell of gas. If your home or workplace is supplied with gas, it is also important that everyone who lives or works there knows how to turn off the gas supply at the meter in case of an emergency. Make sure you know where your emergency valve is and that it is operable. Contact your gas supplier if you need help with this.

If you smell gas at home or work

If you smell gas at home or work, or around your gas meter, here's what you need to do immediately:

1. Extinguish all flames and cigarettes
2. Do not switch on any lights or electrical appliances
3. Turn off all appliances, including LPG appliances
4. If the smell of gas remains, turn the gas off at the meter
5. Open doors and windows to ventilate the area
6. Using a phone away from the gas leak, call Contact on **0800 80 9000**

If you smell gas in the street

If you smell gas in the street, immediately call us or the gas faults number listed on your bill.

Never switch on or off any lights or electrical appliances in the room as this could ignite the gas and cause an explosion. Never use a phone (including mobile phones and radios) near any suspected gas leaks. Never try to track the gas leak yourself. Never use sources of ignition such as matches or lighters in the area.



If your gas supply is stopped or interrupted

Here are some thoughts to help make sure your home will always be filled with nothing but warmth and loveliness.

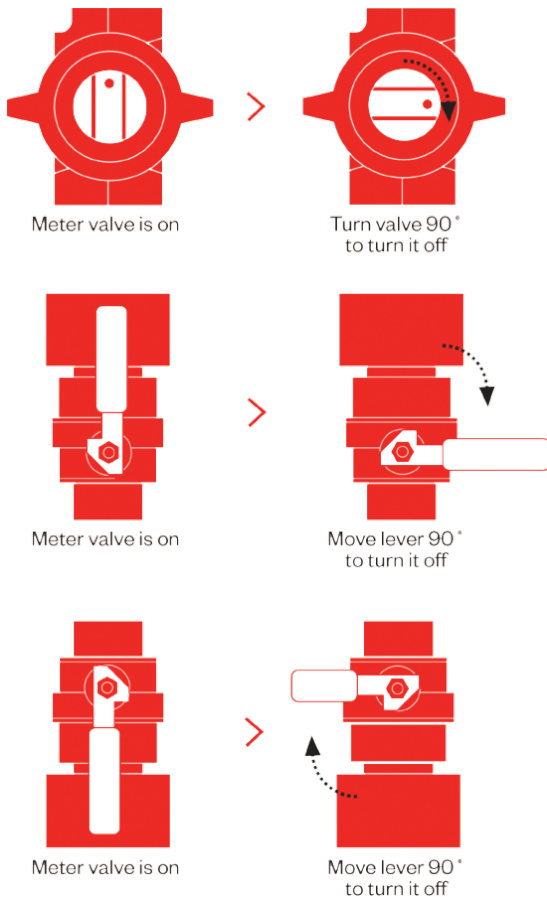
There are lots of reasons why your gas supply could stop. If you should find yourself without gas turn all appliances off and turn off the gas at the meter, then immediately call Contact on **0800 80 9000**.

If only one gas appliance is not working - turn the appliance off and immediately call a licensed gasfitter.

Stopping the gas supply

If your home or workplace is supplied with natural gas through a piped network, you can turn off the gas at the meter outside your home. To turn it off, simply turn the valve on the network pipe 90 degrees, either clockwise or anticlockwise as applicable. You may need a spanner or wrench.

If you are using a freestanding gas appliance with an LPG cylinder, use the valve on top of the cylinder to stop the gas flow. If you have more than one cylinder, all valves need to be closed to shut off the supply.



So, who's responsible for what?

Your local gas network operator is responsible for the gas pipes in your street, the service line from the street to the meter and the network or meter valve on your property. Contact sells the gas to you and is responsible for the meter(s). You are responsible for all gas and gas pipes past the meter, along your customer line and within your house.

Your responsibilities

All gas customers have certain responsibilities relating to gas installations and gas supply equipment. ('Gas supply equipment' means pipes, equipment and any other assets relating to the supply of energy after the meter.)

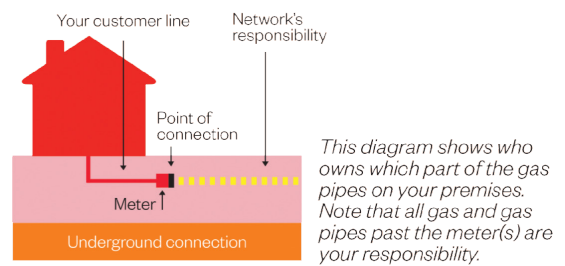
Your responsibilities for installations and gas supply equipment include:

1. Ensuring all gas supply equipment and appliances on your property comply with all legislative requirements
2. Repairs and maintenance to all gas supply equipment and appliances that are located past the point of connection on your property.

You are also responsible for all gas past the meter.

You must let us know promptly if:

1. You have any problems with the quality of your gas supply
2. Any gas supply equipment on your property is defective, damaged or leaking
3. You become aware of a hazardous situation (such as a gas leak).



Any further gas problems?

In the event of a gas supply problem or gas leak, call Contact on **0800 80 9000**.

Gas emergency numbers can be found at the front of the phone book.

If you have any questions about the safe use of your gas appliance, please contact a licensed gasfitter.

Produced in association with Energy Safety which is the regulator for ensuring the safe supply and use of electricity and gas in New Zealand. www.energysafety.govt.nz