



**worker  
beware<sup>®</sup>**

**Working Safely Around Natural Gas Lines**



# Natural Gas Basics

- **Natural gas travels through pressurized underground pipelines of varying diameters.** The size of a gas line is NOT a reliable indicator of the internal pressure.
- **Peoples adds a distinctive, sulfur-like odor to natural gas to assist in the detection of leaks.** However, in certain conditions, you may not be able to smell this odorant.
- **A natural gas leak can be ignited by a tiny flame or spark—even from a lit cigarette or a phone.**



# Notify 811 Before You Dig. It's the Law.

- **Dial 811 or enter an online locate request well in advance of digging or moving earth in any way.** This service will arrange to mark underground utility lines so you can dig safely.
- **Before you contact 811, pre-mark your proposed excavation area** with white paint, flags, and/or stakes so locators can easily identify and mark affected utilities.
- **If you don't notify 811, you risk hitting an underground line.** You, your coworkers, or others could be hurt or killed. You may also be held liable for damages and repairs.



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

# Wait the Required Time

- Wait at least **three business days in Pennsylvania**, excluding weekends and state holidays.
- **Do not dig until all utility owners have marked their lines or advised you that the area is clear to dig.**
- **If you wait the required time and the locate is not completed, do not dig.** Notify 811 to place another locate request.





# Conduct a Visual Site Survey











- **Do not rely exclusively on the locate marks.** Look for visual indicators of underground facilities that have not been marked.
- **Check with property owners about any private underground lines** that would not have been marked by the locator.
- **Also check for signs of something buried after the locate was completed,** such as a fresh trench.
  - If you find a newly installed or unmarked facility, call 811.

# Respect the Marks and Dig with Care

- **Respect the locator marks.** Maintain utility indicator marks and follow them when digging.
- **Dig with care.** Exercise extreme caution when digging near buried utilities, and have a spotter present to observe the excavation whenever heavy equipment is used.
- **Know the underground utility color code:**

## AMERICAN PUBLIC WORKS ASSOCIATION COLOR CODE FOR LOCATOR MARKS



	Electric power lines
	Gas, oil, or steam pipelines
	Communications lines, cables, or conduit
	Potable water
	Reclaimed water, irrigation, and slurry lines
	Sewers and drain lines
	Temporary survey markings
	Your proposed excavation

# Respect the Tolerance Zone

- **Adhere to state laws for digging within the tolerance zone.** This safety area spans the width of a marked utility plus a specified distance from each indicated outside edge: 18" in Pennsylvania.
- **Hand dig prudently in this zone** until you have determined the exact location of the lines.
- **Once visual identification has been achieved,** you may use mechanized digging equipment. Use a spotter to observe the excavation and help prevent damage when heavy equipment is used near gas lines.
- **The tolerance zone is a *minimum* safety clearance.** Protect yourself by using the *maximum* possible distance.





# Know When to Stop Digging



- **If there are no locate marks after you have waited the required time, do NOT dig.**
- **If you do not understand the locate marks, do NOT dig.**
- **If you cannot visually verify the location of marked utility lines by hand digging, STOP digging.**
- **If you find unmarked, mismarked, or seemingly abandoned facilities, STOP digging.**
- **If you see signs of something buried after the locate was completed, such as a fresh trench, STOP digging.**
- **If the marks fade or are destroyed, STOP digging.**



# Watch Out Around Pipeline Markers

- **Pipeline markers indicate the need for extra care** around natural gas transmission pipelines.
- **These markers are general indicators only.** For security purposes, they do not show the exact location, path, or depth of gas pipelines.
- **The markers should never be used as a substitute for calling 811 before digging.**
- **Call the number on the marker if you notice any type of suspicious activity** or construction occurring nearby without Peoples personnel present.



# Natural Gas Leak Detection: Look, Listen, and Smell

- Peoples adds a distinctive, sulfur-like odor to natural gas to assist in leak detection. But in certain conditions, you may not be able to smell this odorant.
- Don't rely on your nose alone. Use your senses of sight, hearing, and smell to detect a natural gas leak. Here are the signs:
  - The distinctive odor of natural gas
  - Continuous bubbling in water
  - A hissing, whistling, or roaring sound
  - Dead or dying vegetation (in an otherwise moist area) over or near a pipeline
  - Dirt or water being blown into the air
  - An exposed pipeline after an earthquake, fire, flood, or other disaster
  - A damaged connection to a gas appliance



# Natural Gas Emergencies

- If you suspect a gas leak or if you contact a gas pipeline, take these steps:
  - **Warn others and leave the area immediately.**
  - **Do not use matches or lighters, start an engine, or operate any electrical device—even a phone.** A spark could ignite the gas, causing a fire or explosion.
  - **Leave the excavation open.** Do not operate any gas pipeline valves or attempt to bury or fix the pipeline.
  - **From a safe location, call Peoples and 911.** Excavators are required by law to call 911 in the event of escaping gas. Call the utility even if there is no visible damage to the pipeline.
  - **Stay far away from the area** until safety officials say it is safe to return.
  - **Report the incident to your supervisor.**



# Natural Gas Safety Review

- **Notify 811 at least three business days before you dig in Pennsylvania, excluding weekends and state holidays.**
- **Pre-mark your dig area with white paint, flags, and/or stakes.**
- **Wait the required amount of time.**
- **Conduct a visual site survey before digging.**
- **Respect the marks and dig with care.**
- **Watch out around pipeline markers.**
- **Know the warning signs of a natural gas leak.**
- **If you suspect a natural gas leak, warn others, leave the area, avoid spark hazards, and call Peoples and **911** immediately.**



# Contact Information

Here is some contact information you may find helpful:

- In case of a natural gas emergency, call Peoples: **1.800.400.4271**
- For additional information, visit the Peoples worker safety website at **[peoples-gas.e-smartworkers.com](https://peoples-gas.e-smartworkers.com)**

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**Thank You**

