

## energyESSENTIALS

Public Awareness | District of Columbia



Summer 2024

### CALL 811 BEFORE YOU DIG

Digging-related damage is a major cause of pipeline accidents. **811** is the national **Call Before You Dig** telephone number that initiates the process of marking the underground utility lines in your yard or on your job. Your call to **811** will be routed to your local One Call Center – in the District of Columbia, Maryland or Virginia. Local One Call Center personnel will then notify member utilities, such as Washington Gas, to mark the approximate locations of underground utility lines with high-visibility safety paint and/or flags. The service is **free**.

Everyone, including **homeowners and construction companies**, should **always** call **811**, at least **two full business/working days** – excluding weekends and holidays – **before** you are scheduled to begin any type of digging, regardless of size or depth.

**This includes, but is not limited to:**

- General digging
- Gardening and Landscaping
- Home improvements and/or major construction
- Excavation
- Demolition



**When using mechanized equipment, it's required by law to call 811 before you dig.**

Do not begin digging until the lines have been marked or confirmed as “no conflict.” If you are unsure whether the underground utilities have been marked in your yard or on your job, check back with your One Call Center to make certain there are no underground utilities where you plan to dig. If for some reason you cannot connect to **811**, for Maryland and the District of Columbia, call **800.257.7777** or **202.265.7177**. In Virginia, call **800.552.7001**.

Most importantly, dialing **811** can help avoid serious injury and even fatalities, as well as property damage. Significant expenses can occur when underground utilities are damaged.

**ALWAYS CALL 811 BEFORE YOU DIG, EACH DIG, EVERY DIG.**

To learn more about the **811** waiting period for line marking in the District of Columbia and Maryland, visit [missutility.net](https://missutility.net). In Virginia, call [va811.com](https://va811.com) or the Common Ground Alliance at [commongroundalliance.com](https://commongroundalliance.com).

### CONSTRUCTION? REMODELING? LOCATION. LOCATION. LOCATION.

Building a structure over or too close to a natural gas pipeline isn't just a safety hazard. It could also mean that you are violating federal pipeline safety regulations. Washington Gas policy prohibits building any enclosed structure over a natural gas line.

**FORTUNATELY, AVOIDING THIS PROBLEM IS EASY!**



Contact us at **703.750.4360** to arrange for a free locating inspection before new construction or remodeling.



### WASHINGTON GAS CARES. BECAUSE LIFE HAPPENS.

**We're here to help, so contact us today.** The sooner you reach out to us, the sooner we can assist you with billing options that simplify your life. Visit us at [washingtongascare.com](https://washingtongascare.com).

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU SMELL NATURAL GAS

Natural gas is non-toxic, colorless, odorless and combustible. For your safety, we add an odorant called mercaptan to natural gas delivered through our distribution system. Mercaptan gives natural gas a strong, unpleasant odor so you will be able to detect escaping natural gas.

Call ☎ **202.624.6092** to receive our *Natural Gas Safety* brochure with a scratch-and-sniff sample of mercaptan. Government agencies, schools, businesses, property managers and others are welcome to request multiple copies of the brochure for public education and awareness purposes.

### IF YOU SMELL NATURAL GAS

- If you smell natural gas, **do not attempt to locate the source of the odor**. Evacuate the premises **immediately** and call ☎ **911** and our *Emergency Leak Line* at ☎ **844-WASHGAS** (844.927.4427).
- If the odor is very strong or you hear a blowing or hissing noise, vacate the building **immediately**, leaving doors unlocked as you go. Warn others as you exit. **Do nothing that could create an ignition source.**

Do not light a match or use any type of phone or battery-powered equipment. Do not turn electrical equipment or light switches on or off. Do not start your car or any type of motorized equipment. Call ☎ **911** and the appropriate Washington Gas emergency numbers as instructed above **only after** you have reached a safe distance away from the building or area.

### OTHER SIGNS OF NATURAL GAS

Because gas traveling through a small portion of our transmission pipeline is not odorized, visible and audible signs of a possible leak are also described below.

**Follow the same precautions listed above if you:**

- Are outside and smell gas
- Hear hissing or blowing noises
- See dirt being thrown into the air
- See fire coming from the ground or appearing to burn aboveground
- See water bubbling or being blown into the air at a pond, creek or river
- See a dry spot in a moist field
- See dead or dying vegetation on or near a pipeline right-of-way

## HOW PIPELINES WORK

The Washington Gas system is part of a vast nationwide network of mostly underground pipelines that deliver natural gas. The company operates a relatively small segment of Department of Transportation (DOT) – regulated **transmission pipelines** – approximately 170 miles – and thousands of miles of **distribution pipelines**.

Typically, **transmission pipelines** carry natural gas at higher pressures from “gate stations,” where gas enters the pipeline system, to “regulator stations,” where pressure is further reduced for distribution to customers. **Pipeline markers** indicate the presence (but not the exact location or depth) of **transmission pipelines** in underground rights-of-way. Pipeline markers identify the type of fuel being transported; the name of the pipeline operator; and 24-hour, toll-free phone numbers to **call in the event of an emergency**. Nearly one-half of Washington Gas’ **transmission pipelines** are in High Consequence Areas (HCAs), where the potential failure of a pipeline could have significant impact on people or property.

**Distribution pipelines**, like **transmission pipelines**, can have an impact on people and property if damaged by digging or excavating. The majority of underground **distribution pipelines** are generally **not** marked aboveground, so it is critical to call **811** to have the lines located **before** you begin any digging, gardening or excavating. This service is **free**.

Washington Gas policy prohibits building an enclosed structure over a natural gas line. If you have an enclosed structure over your gas line, or believe you do, please contact us at ☎ **703.750.4360**. Additionally, it is very important to keep the area around your gas meter clear of all objects, including mulch, construction debris or other flammable materials that could create a fire hazard.



For more information, contact our *Damage Prevention Hotline* at ☎ **800.428.5364** with your questions and contact information. A Washington Gas representative will return your call.

## METER TAMPERING/GAS THEFT

Tampering with a natural gas meter is **illegal** and **dangerous**. The natural gas meter at your home – whether located inside or outside – belongs to Washington Gas. Call our *Gas Theft Hotline* at ☎ **703.750.4570** if you see suspicious activity involving a Washington Gas meter. The company offers rewards for verified reports of illegal piping connections or stolen meters.



You may leave a recorded message with your name and other contact information, but you are not required to identify yourself unless you wish to be considered for a reward. Customers outside the local calling area may dial ☎ **844-WASHGAS** (844.927.4427).