



# WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT A GAS PIPELINE LEAK

A tip guide to help keep your family and community safe

**METHANE GAS** (often known as natural gas) has heated the homes of many Americans for over a century — and for over a century, it has been prone to leaks, putting communities and the environment in danger. When it leaks, methane gas can do significant damage, especially when it catches fire or explodes.

From 2010 through nearly the end of 2021, almost 2,600 gas pipeline incidents occurred in the United States that were serious enough to require reporting to the federal government. **That's the equivalent to one every 40 hours.**

Of those, 850 resulted in fires and 328 in explosions. Those incidents caused more than 122 deaths and 600 injuries. Issues such as property damage, emergency services and lost gas, cost communities nearly \$4 billion. These incidents also resulted in 26.6 billion cubic feet of leaked gas, equivalent to the global warming emissions of over 2.4 million passenger vehicles driven for a year.

**This guide will explain the warning signs and how to keep your family safe if you suspect a gas pipeline leak in your community.**

## How to spot a pipeline

Methane gas pipelines run underground through our communities and neighborhoods but can often be identified by above ground markers, usually where a pipeline meets a street, highway or railroad crossing.



*A pipeline marker in Massachusetts.  
Photo by staff.*

## The signs of a pipeline leak

### You may see:

- Liquid pools, or discolored or abnormally dry soil/vegetation
- Oily sheen on water surfaces
- Blowing dirt around a pipeline area
- Fire coming from the ground or appearing to burn aboveground
- Dead or discolored plants in an otherwise healthy area of vegetation
- Frozen ground in warm weather.

### You may hear:

- Depending on the size of the leak, a quiet hissing or a loud roar.

### You may smell:

- A gaseous odor
- A skunk-like odor.

## What to do if you suspect a gas leak in your neighborhood

### If you suspect a gas pipeline is leaking near your home, you should:

- Turn off gas appliances
- Leave the area and alert others that they should leave the area (knock on the door, do not use door bells)
- Call 911 and the pipeline or gas company from a safe location (not in the vicinity of the suspected leak).

### What NOT to do:

- DO NOT come into direct contact with any escaping liquids or gas.
- DO NOT attempt to operate any pipeline valves yourself.
- DO NOT cause any open flame or other potential source of ignition such as an electrical switch, vehicle ignition, light a match, etc.
- DO NOT start motor vehicles or electrical equipment.
- DO NOT use telephones or cell phones. If inside homes or businesses, do not pull plugs from electrical outlets or open automatic garages.
- DO NOT ring doorbells to notify others of the leak. Knock with your hand to avoid a potential spark from metal knockers.
- DO NOT drive into a leak or vapor cloud while leaving the area.
- DO NOT attempt to extinguish a natural gas fire. Wait for local firemen and other emergency professionals trained to deal with emergencies.

*For more information, visit the U.S. Department of Transportation Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Administration's website [here](#) or contact your local gas provider.*

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