



# Natural Gas Pipeline Safety

Information for Our Neighbors

**Consumers Energy**

Count on Us®



## Pipeline Safety in Your Community

**Knowing the signs of a natural gas leak, practicing safe digging and being aware of proper land use near pipelines all go a long way to keeping you and your family safe.**



We want to make you aware of our continuing efforts to keep our community safe and how you can play a role. As one of the state's largest natural gas companies, we take our job of ensuring pipeline safety very seriously. Here's a little about us:

- Consumers Energy provides natural gas service to more than 1.8 million Michigan customers.
- To help keep natural gas flowing to homes and businesses, we operate and maintain multiple natural gas storage fields along with compressor stations, which pressurize the natural gas so it can move quickly through more than 28,000 miles of pipelines to get to your home.
- We reduce the pressure in regulating facilities, called city gates, so the natural gas can be used in your home 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.

Knowing the signs of a natural gas leak, practicing safe digging and being aware of proper land use near pipelines all go a long way to keeping you and your family safe.

## Keep your friends, family and neighbors safe!

If you see an excavation site or someone digging with no utility markings and believe utility lines exist in the area, call MISS DIG at 8-1-1 to place a Concerned Caller Ticket.

## Safe Digging

### Damage Prevention and Michigan Law

A major cause of natural gas 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.



For your safety, Michigan law (Public Act 174) requires all utility lines be marked before beginning any excavation project. Always contact MISS DIG 811 by calling 8-1-1 or visiting [MISSDIG811.org](http://MISSDIG811.org) at least three business days before digging to have underground facilities marked.

MISS DIG 811 is a free service that will contact utility companies to have underground lines marked with stakes, flags or paint. Contact 8-1-1 even for routine jobs such as planting shrubs or trees, replacing a mailbox post or installing a fence or deck.

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

Underground facilities belonging to the property owner such as power to yard lights, invisible dog fences, sprinkler systems and natural gas lines to barbecue grills are considered private utilities and will not be staked by utilities responding to a MISS DIG 811 request. Residents are responsible for marking these lines. Contractors who can provide personal staking services for a fee are available.

#### 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 at 800-477-5050 immediately if you believe you may have hit or nicked a natural gas line.

## Responding to Natural Gas Leaks

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

### 1. Recognize

- “Rotten egg” smell (which is added for your safety).
- 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.

**NOTE:** Consumers Energy also may operate high-pressure transmission pipelines in your area. Signs of a transmission 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 including electrical devices, such as light switches, telephones, cell phones and 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 a Consumers Energy employee says it’s safe to do so.

### 3. Report – Go to a safe location

- Once you’re safe, call 9-1-1 and then Consumers Energy toll-free at 800-477-5050, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- If you see unusual activity near a natural gas pipeline or facility, call us at 800-760-3295. We will respond to both events free of charge.



## Natural Gas Safety Facts

### Detecting natural gas leaks

- Natural gas is naturally colorless, tasteless and odorless.
- A “rotten egg” odor is added before the gas enters the local distribution system for delivery to local homes and businesses so gas leaks can be detected quickly, without special equipment.
- Natural gas in most large transmission pipelines is odorless.

### 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 electronic items 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; eventually the gas will dissipate if outside or in open, ventilated spaces. However, you should always evacuate the area, indoors or out, if a natural gas leak is suspected.



## 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).

## Natural Gas Pipeline Markers

Since high-pressure pipelines are buried 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 in right-of-ways (easements) obtained from 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 pools are NOT allowed in the corridor.
- Underground facilities, such as drain tiles, culverts, electric cables, septic systems, water wells, etc. shall NOT be constructed in the corridor.
- No soil is to be added or removed over the pipeline.
- No roads shall be constructed over or across pipelines without first consulting the pipeline owner.
- No planting trees or shrubs in the corridor.
- No blasting shall be conducted in the corridor.
- No debris, excess material, etc. shall be placed over the pipeline.
- No vehicles or equipment shall be driven over the pipeline or down the corridor.

## Farm Safety

If your farming activities include deep plowing, fence post installation, trenching, leveling, installing drain tile, sub soiling or other excavation work, it's vital and required to contact MISS DIG 811 at least three business days before starting any digging. A Consumers Energy representative will mark underground lines at no cost.



## Natural Gas Hazards

We work hard to maintain a safe natural gas system. However, if not timely addressed, 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, outriggers, etc.
- Water main breaks that weaken roadways and pavement.
- 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.

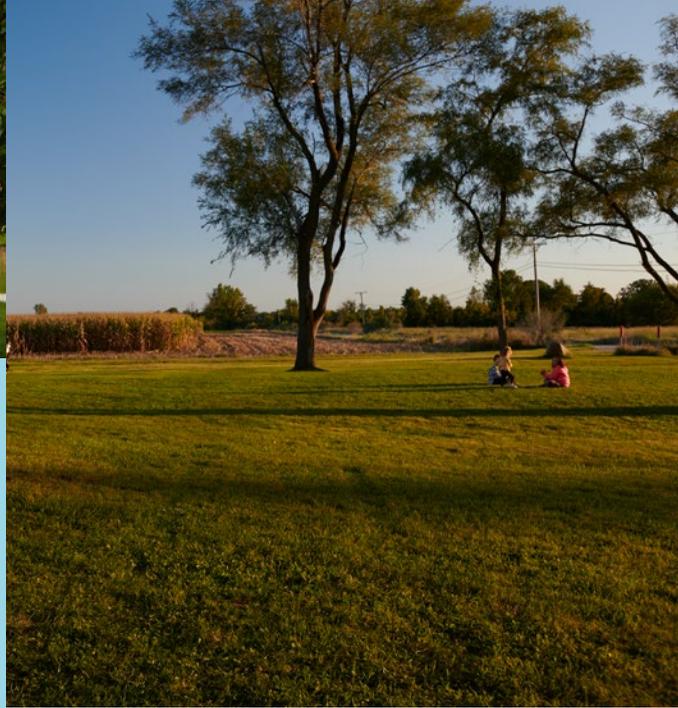


## Pipeline Safety Programs

We have programs 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 specific standards for the development of integrity management programs near these High Consequence Areas. Some of our many safety efforts 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 811 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 and for free 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 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.



## Using Consumers Energy Land

Obstruction-free pipeline corridors help us to safely deliver natural gas to our customers. 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 866-679-4054 or email [LandContracts@cmsenergy.com](mailto:LandContracts@cmsenergy.com).

## Safety Performance

For more information on our transmission pipeline safety performance visit us at: [ConsumersEnergy.com/community/safety/work-safe/pipeline-safety](https://ConsumersEnergy.com/community/safety/work-safe/pipeline-safety)



**If you see suspicious activity near a pipeline or gas facility, call 9-1-1 and our security command center: 800-760-3295**

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### **For more information**

- Consumers Energy 800-477-5050
- [ConsumersEnergy.com/digsafe](https://ConsumersEnergy.com/digsafe)
- [missdig811.org](https://missdig811.org)
- [PublicSafety@cmsenergy.com](mailto:PublicSafety@cmsenergy.com)

**Learn more about pipeline safety:**



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