

Ameren Illinois Natural Gas Safety Tips

Overview

Ameren Illinois delivers that safe and reliable natural gas to more than 800,000 customers via 18,500 miles of transmission/distribution pipeline.

The company is investing in the natural gas system (e.g. replacing vintage steel pipes) across its 43,700 square-mile service territory, but for a wide variety of reasons, natural gas leaks can occur.

Q. What does a natural gas leak smell like?

A. Natural gas has a distinctive rotten egg scent. If you catch a whiff, evacuate the premises immediately without flipping any light switches, using electronics, closing the door or taking any other action that could generate a spark.

- Once you get out and are a safe distance away, call Ameren Illinois at 800.755.5000.
- Once you leave, never go back inside the home or business until it has been ok'd by an Ameren Illinois gas journeyman who has inspected the premises.
- Ameren Illinois responds within one hour, but average response time is about 22 minutes.
- There is never a charge for investigating a gas leak, and crews will respond 24/7/365.
- Ameren Illinois would always prefer that you err on the side of caution and call if a leak is suspected. Never ignore a natural gas leak.

Q. Is it true if the natural gas flame isn't a sharp blue color, there could be an issue with natural gas in your home?

A. Yes. The natural gas flame should be a sharp blue color. If it is orange, yellow or looks sloppy, that is a warning sign and is a sign of carbon monoxide.

Q. Is it true Ameren Illinois adds an odorant to natural gas?

A. Yes. Natural gas is odorless and colorless, but Ameren Illinois adds an odorant, mercaptan, to give the natural gas its easily detectable rotten egg scent.

Q. What does an Ameren Illinois journeyman do when he or she arrives to the home of a suspected natural gas leak?

A. When someone calls Ameren Illinois to report a natural gas leak, the call is escalated and a crew is immediately dispatched to the area.

Upon arrival, crews perform a visual inspection for any outward signs of a leak, as well as inspect the piping, appliances, the outside perimeter of the home and meter set. If a leak is confirmed, crews work to isolate the problem to make it safe.

Q. Can you give us any tips to prevent a gas leak?

- Have your natural gas furnace and other appliances inspected annually by a qualified contractor. This way you can be certain everything is operating both safely and in an energy efficient manner.
 - If purchasing new natural gas appliances, ensure they are high quality and ENERGY STAR certified.
- Never use a gas oven or range top as a space heater.
- Avoid storing flammable products such as paint stripper, fabric softener or salt bags in close proximity of your natural gas water heater or furnace.
- Always call 8-1-1 (J.U.L.I.E) before conducting any projects that require digging. This will help prevent underground facility damage and potentially dangerous situations.

Keep gas appliances operating safely:

- Have a qualified heating contractor inspect your furnace annually. A properly tuned furnace saves energy and helps avoid costly repairs.
- Check the flue to make sure it is clean and open. Any fuel that does not burn completely can create harmful levels of carbon monoxide. Carbon Monoxide is a gas with no color, odor or taste. It can collect in your home if a fuel-burning appliance isn't working properly or venting as it should.
- Keep forced-air furnace filters clean. Clean or replace them according to the manufacturer's recommendation.
- Avoid using or storing these products near the furnace: paint stripper, fabric or water softener, bleach, adhesives, or salt for melting ice. The chlorine or fluorine in these items can lead to furnace corrosion.
- Keep your heat registers and cold-air returns clean so the air can flow properly. Also, arrange your furniture and drapes so they don't block the air flow.