Natural gas is one of the safest, most reliable and environmentally friendly fuels in use today, but leaks can occur. There are three key ways to recognize a natural gas leak:

1. **Look.** Blowing dirt, bubbling water or ponds, dry spots in moist areas or dead plants surrounded by green, live plants also may indicate a natural gas leak.
2. **Listen.** An unusual hissing sound near gas lines or appliances may indicate a natural gas leak.
3. **Smell.** In its raw state, natural gas is odorless and odorless. Natural gas utility companies add a substance called mercaptan to create the familiar rotten-egg-like odor you associate with natural gas. You should take action even if you detect only the faint odor of natural gas in the area.

**Take Action for Natural Gas Safety**

Here are some keywords to help you remember what to do if a natural gas leak is suspected.

1. **Leave.** Leave the area immediately. Do not try to find or stop the leak.
2. **Don’t touch.** Do not smoke, use a cell phone, flashlights, turn on or off any lights or appliances or operate any kind of vehicle or equipment that could create a spark.
3. **Dial.** Immediately notify the City of Charlottesville-Public Utilities at (434) 293-9164. If the smell of gas is particularly strong, call 9-1-1.

Do your part to familiarize yourself and your family with these natural gas safety tips and continue to enjoy the value, comfort and benefits of America’s cleanest, most efficient energy source!

**Homes, Businesses, Industries.**

Natural gas is America’s most popular home heating fuel—hunting more household than all other energy forms combined. In all, 32 percent of all U.S. households have natural gas heat.

Natural gas is increasingly popular for use by homeowners, schools, businesses and electric power-generation plants because it is efficient, clean, reliable and a relative bargain compared to alternative energy sources.

In our community, City of Charlottesville-Public Utilities Division provides natural gas to more than 18,300 customers through a network of natural gas underground pipelines. Main gas lines branch into household service lines. The pipes are typically made of black plastic with four yellow stripes or coated steel which helps prevent corrosion. The main lines are typically 2 to 4 inches in diameter and are located roughly two to three feet below the surface, while service lines are typically half-inch to three-quarter-inch in diameter and buried 18 to 24 inches below the surface.

**Call Before You Dig—It’s the Law**

That’s why it’s important to call Before You Dig or move earth in any way.

Whether you’re installing an underground dog fence, running water to an outbuilding or posthole digging for a new small barn, underground piping and other utilities can be damaged. When you call the Min Utility toll-free number (800-952-7001), all buried utility lines on your property will be professionally located, so you can safely dig and prevent a potentially hazardous condition. Virginia state laws require you to call at least 3 working days before excavation takes place. The service is free of charge.

For gas emergency, call (434) 293-9164.

**Detecting a Natural Gas Leak**

Underground utilities, including natural gas pipelines, exist everywhere. City of Charlottesville-Public Utilities is responsible for gas line that serve your home or business up to and including your meter. You are responsible for gas lines beyond your gas meter. If your buried gas piping is metallic, it is subject to corrosion and eventually gas leaks. To ensure safety a plumbing or heating contractor can locate, inspect and make any necessary repairs to your underground piping periodically.

In addition, it’s important to familiarize yourself with any pipeline marked that run on or over your property. They may be found near a gas pipeline’s Right of Way (ROW) or easements. The ROW provides sufficient space for pipeline operations to inspect and perform maintenance on the pipeline. If you ever damage or break over one of these pipeline markers, contact City of Charlottesville-Public Utilities at (434) 293-9164.

In our community, watch for markers indicating where natural gas pipelines are located. Pipeline markers include the phone number that you should use in case of an emergency.

**How to Recognize Carbon Monoxide Hazards**

Incomplete combustion of natural gas or propane produces Carbon Monoxide (CO), which is a highly toxic gas. Carbon Monoxide is odorless, colorless and toxic even in small amounts. A person exposed to high levels of CO may experience dizziness, headache, nausea, sleepiness and similar symptoms. When persons with these symptoms are encountered, get them into fresh air immediately. Call 9-1-1 for medical help.

For gas emergency, call (434) 293-9164.