

UTILITY SHUT-OFF AND SAFETY (FEMA)

NATURAL GAS

Natural gas leaks and explosions are responsible for a significant number of fires following disasters. It is vital that all household members know how to shut off natural gas.

Because there are different gas shut-off procedures for different gas meter configurations, it is important to contact your local gas company for any guidance on preparations and response regarding gas appliances and gas service to your home.

When you learn the proper shut-off procedure for your meter, share the information with everyone in your household. Be sure not to actually turn off the gas when practicing the proper gas shut-off procedures.

If you smell gas or hear a blowing or hissing noise, open a window and get everyone out quickly. Turn off the gas, using the outside main valve, if you can, and call the gas company from a neighbor's home.

Shutting off gas may require a specialty wrench, find out in advance what your home requires before an emergency.

Caution: If you turn off the gas for any reason, a qualified professional must turn it back on. NEVER attempt to turn the gas back on yourself.



WATER

Water quickly becomes a precious resource following many disasters. It is vital that all household members learn how to shut off the water at the main house valve.

Before an emergency happens, locate the shut-off valve for the water line that enters your house and label this valve with a tag for easy identification. Make sure all household members know where it is located.



Make sure this valve can be completely shut off. Your valve may be rusted open or it may only partially close. If so, replace it.

Cracked lines may pollute the water supply to your house. It is wise to shut off your water until you hear from authorities that it is safe for drinking.

The effects of gravity may drain the water in your hot water heater and toilet tanks unless you trap it in your house by shutting off the main house valve. (This is not the street valve in the cement box at the curb – the street valve is extremely difficult to turn and requires a special tool.)

ELECTRICITY

Electrical sparks have the potential of igniting natural gas if it is leaking. It is wise to teach all responsible household members where and how to shut off the electricity. Locate your electrical circuit box. For your safety, always shut off all the individual circuits before shutting off the main circuit.

INSPECTING UTILITIES IN A DAMAGED HOME

Check for gas leaks - If you smell gas or hear blowing or hissing noise, open a window and quickly leave the building. Turn off the gas at the outside main valve if you can and call the gas company from a neighbor's home. If you turn off the gas for any reason, it must be turned back on by a professional.

Look for electrical system damage - If you see sparks or broken or frayed wires, or if you smell hot insulation, turn off the electricity at the main fuse box or circuit breaker. If you have to step in water to get to the fuse box or circuit breaker, call an electrician for advice.

Check for sewage and water line damage - If you suspect sewage lines are damaged avoid using the toilets and call a plumber. If water pipes are damaged, contact the water company and avoid the water from the tap.

NATURAL GAS IN AN EMERGENCY: HOW CAN YOU BE PREPARED FOR A DISASTER?

Secure your water heater

One of the most common types of earthquake damage is broken gas and water lines resulting from unsecured water heaters. A full water heater is very heavy and, if unsecured, can move during an earthquake.

If it moves too far or falls over, it is likely to break both water and gas lines. It is recommended that water heaters be secured to the floor or wall to prevent such damage and to preserve the water it contains.

Having a supply of clean drinking water is very important during an emergency, and your water heater can be a good source. To secure your water heater, you can call a contractor or do it yourself.

Know how and when to turn off your Natural Gas meter

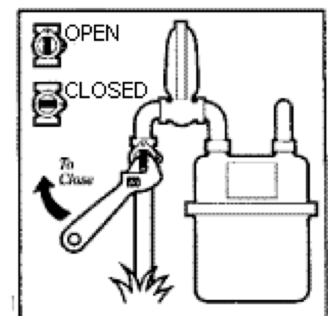
It may not be necessary to turn off your natural gas meter following an earthquake. In fact, since natural gas meters should be turned back on only by qualified persons, customers turning them off unnecessarily may have to wait extended periods of time for gas to be restored.

When Should You Turn Off Your Gas Meter?

- If there is structural damage to your home.
- You smell natural gas.
- You hear gas leaking.
- There is a fire. CAUTION: Do not shut off the gas if doing so jeopardizes your safety.

How to shut off your gas meter

The meter shut-off valve is located next to the meter as shown. Use a wrench to turn the valve a quarter turn in either direction to the 'off' position shown in the illustration. If you turn the meter off, do not attempt to turn it back on yourself.



EVACUATION

Several types of disasters may force you to be evacuated from your home.

If you are told to evacuate, take the following steps:

- Listen carefully to instructions given by local officials. Evacuate immediately if told to do so.
- If you have time, grab your portable disaster (72-hour) kit. Make sure that you include any last-minute items, such as prescription medication, that you may need.
- Wear appropriate clothing and sturdy shoes.
- Lock your home.
- Use travel routes outlined by local officials. Do not take short cuts; they may be unsafe.
- Keep fuel in your car if evacuation seems likely. Gas stations may be closed during emergencies.
- If you go to a shelter, notify staff of any special needs you may have. They will try to accommodate you and make you comfortable.
- Be prepared to leave your home if:
 - Your area is without electrical power or water for an extended period of time.
 - There is a chemical emergency affecting your area.
 - Flood water is rising.
 - A wild land fire is burning near your home.
 - Your home has been severely damaged.
 - Local officials tell you to evacuate

Evacuations are more common than many people realize. Hundreds of times each year, transportation and industrial accidents release harmful substances, forcing thousands of people to leave their homes. Fires and floods cause evacuations even more frequently.