Natural Gas Q&A

Rock Energy Cooperative operates about 175 miles of natural gas pipeline in northern Illinois with nearly 9,000 services. Our distribution system is regularly monitored and inspected for corrosion and leaks to ensure safe and reliable service. Please review this safety information so you can help us prevent pipeline damage, learn how to recognize a natural gas emergency, and take the appropriate action if an accident occurs.

What is natural gas?

Natural gas is an economical and reliable source of energy that is completely safe when used properly. It is formed when layers of buried plants and animals are exposed to intense heat and pressure over millions of years. Because natural gas is lighter than air, it rises and dissipates into the atmosphere if it escapes from a pipeline. Underground, however, it may follow the path of least resistance, accumulating in a confined space or traveling to an ignition source. Natural gas is easily ignited by heat, sparks, or flames and can cause explosions.

How is it transported?

Pipelines are the safest and most economical method of transporting natural gas, according to the National Transportation Safety Board. Because pipelines are buried underground, warning signs are used to indicate their presence along the right-of-way. The signs are clearly marked with the operator's name and emergency phone number. The pipeline right-of-way must remain free of structures, vegetation, and any other obstructions. Maintaining a right-of-way free of encroachments is essential to ensuring the safety and integrity of pipelines.

How can I prevent pipeline damage?

Damage from digging is the most common cause of underground natural gas leaks. Even a small scratch in the pipeline coating may result in corrosion that could lead to a leak. Always call 811 before you dig or excavate to avoid hitting a natural gas pipeline or other buried utility line. Illinois law requires people to call at least two business days before any digging project. Utilities then will send a representative to the site so all underground lines can be marked. The call and service are absolutely free. Remember that Rock Energy Cooperative maintains buried gas pipes up to your meter. All pipes beyond that are the member's responsibility and should be periodically inspected for corrosion and leaks.

How can I recognize a leak?

By smell: Gas providers add a chemical that makes natural gas smell like rotten eggs so any leaks can be easily detected.

By sound: An unusual hissing, roaring, or whistling sound along a natural gas line or coming from an appliance might signify a leak.

By sight: Unexplained dead grass, bubbling water, and blowing dirt near a meter or along the pipeline route are signs of a leak.

What should I do if I suspect a leak?

If you smell a faint odor:

✔ Make sure all gas appliances and burners on your stove are turned off completely. If the odor is eliminated when you turn off an appliance, call a repair person because the problem most likely is isolated to that one appliance. Rock Energy provides natural gas to your home or business but does not have a service department that repairs malfunctioning appliances.

✔ Open one or more windows and wait a few minutes for the odor to dissipate before investigating further.

✔ Check the pilot lights on your gas furnace, water heater, stove, and oven.

✔ Don't try to relight a gas appliance while you can still smell gas.

✔ If you need assistance relighting the pilot light, call a heating or plumbing contractor.

If you smell a strong odor:

✔ Leave the area immediately.

✔ Do not use a phone until you're safely away from the suspected leak. Then call Rock Energy Cooperative at (866) 752-4550 or contact your gas provider.

✔ Do not light a match or turn on or off any switches, flashlights, garage door openers, or other appliances because an electric arc might ignite the gas.

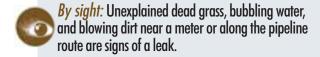### How can I get more information?

If you have any questions about natural gas safety, we would be happy to provide you with further information. Just call us at (866) 752-4550. We also encourage you to visit these websites to get more information about pipeline safety.

Rock Energy: www.rock.coop
Call 811: www.call811.com
Diggers Hotline: www.diggershotline.com
JULIE (Joint Utility Locating Information for Excavators): www.illinois1call.com
National Pipeline Mapping System: www.npms.phmsa.dot.gov

Rock Energy Cooperative
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

811 Know what's below. Call before you dig.