

Rock Energy's Annual Survey Hunts for Natural Gas Leaks

Natural gas technicians at Rock Energy Cooperative spent three weeks this spring surveying all 173 miles of the co-op's gas mains to hunt for any leaks.

"Natural gas is one of the safest and most reliable forms of energy," said Randy Gant, natural gas superintendent. "Leak detection surveys like this one help Rock Energy maintain its excellent safety record."

Armed with a remote methane leak detector, the technicians traveled area roads and streets in a slow-moving utility vehicle to ensure the safety and reliability of natural gas service to members. The state-of-the-art detector has a range of 100 feet and sounds an alarm when any methane—the primary component of natural gas—is detected.

"This is a very efficient and effective way to detect any natural gas leaks along the road right-of-way and street openings, like manholes and pavement cracks," Gant said. "When leaks are detected, the technicians classify them based on their severity and crews are dispatched to remedy the situations."

The following information will help you and your families stay safe around natural gas.

How can I recognize a natural gas leak?

- **By smell:** Natural gas is colorless and odorless, but gas providers add a chemical that makes it smell like rotten eggs so any leaks can be easily detected.
- **By sound:** A hissing or roaring sound coming from a natural gas line might be a sign of a leak.
- **By sight:** If you see unexplained dead grass, natural gas might be leaking. Dirt or debris blowing in the air and water bubbling in a puddle, pond, or creek are other signs.



Gas foreman Jason Mayer, left, and gas technician Robby Jones use a remote methane leak detector during the co-op's annual natural gas survey.

What should I do if I suspect a leak?

If you smell a faint gas odor:

- Make sure all gas appliances and burners on your stove are turned off completely.
- Open one or more windows and wait a few minutes for the gas 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 the telephone or cell phone until you reach a safe location away from the suspected leak. Then call Rock Energy at (866) 752-4550 to report the location.
- 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 prevent pipeline damage?

- Call 811 before you dig or excavate to avoid hitting a natural gas pipeline or other buried utility line. State law requires people to call at least two 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 free.
- Remember that Rock Energy 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 get additional 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 or email questions@rock.coop.



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