



OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF

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TIP OF THE WEEK

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NATURAL GAS SAFETY

Natural gas is often used in commercial and residential settings. Some uses include heating homes or powering appliances such as stoves and grills. In some areas, natural gas is piped directly into homes similar to water and electricity. Some households also use generators or other natural gas-powered appliances during power outages or emergencies. As with any plumbing system, leaks can happen but there are some ways to keep you safer if you use natural gas at home or at work.

In its original state, natural gas is odorless, colorless, and extremely flammable. Gas companies add a chemical called mercaptan, or methanethiol, to make natural gas smell like rotten eggs. If it smelled like fresh baked cookies, that gas leak may not alert you to the problem, but instead leave you looking for dessert when you should be evacuating the building. Natural gas can displace the air in a confined space which can cause headaches, nausea, carbon monoxide poisoning, and/or suffocation.

If you hear or smell a natural gas leak, there are some steps you should take:

- Do not use your cell phone, landline telephone, or other electronic devices.
- Do not light matches, use lighters, or generate any sparks.
- Do not use any electrical switches, even turning the lights off could create a spark inside the switch.
- Evacuate everyone from the area.
- Call 911 from a phone in another area or building away from the leak.
- Contact your natural gas provider.

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If you smell natural gas or hear the hissing sound of a gas leak, it's always safest to leave the area immediately and contact your gas company. After a natural disaster, such as an earthquake, it could be several days or longer before they are able to reach your home. Do not turn off your natural gas unless you smell gas, hear the sound of gas escaping, or see other signs of a leak. Only turn it off if it is safe to do so.

Always have an emergency plan, evacuation meeting point, and ensure all household members know what to do if there is a gas leak. Check with your natural gas service provider to see if they have additional safety information and resources.

For more information and tips visit our website at www.lincolncountysheriff.net and like us on Facebook at Lincoln County Sheriff's Office – Oregon.

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