

# Staying safe with electricity and natural gas



## Emergency safety

In an emergency, whether it involves electricity, natural gas or both, here are some things to keep in mind:

- ▶ The best time to prepare is before an emergency happens, so have an emergency plan.
- ▶ Call **911**. Ask for the police department, fire department rescue service or SDG&E®.
- ▶ If an accident causes a fire, fight it with a dry chemical or CO<sub>2</sub> extinguisher.
- ▶ If possible, shut off the power.
- ▶ Don't touch power lines. The line may still be energized and dangerous.
- ▶ Freeing someone from energized power lines or equipment should only be attempted by a qualified SDG&E employee or a trained rescuer, such as a fire fighter.

## Staying safe with electricity

### Safety with fallen electric lines

Report any downed lines immediately to **911** or **1-800-411-7343**. Always assume a downed line is live. Never touch a fallen line, person or vehicle in contact with the line. If an electric line touches your vehicle while you are inside:

- ▶ Stay inside your vehicle until emergency help arrives.
- ▶ Warn others to stay away from the vehicle and direct them to call **911**.
- ▶ If you must leave the vehicle for safety reasons, jump clear. Never touch the vehicle and the ground at the same time.

### Portable generator safety

During a power outage, DO NOT connect a portable generator to the SDG&E system, or to a system connected to an SDG&E line. The power from your generator could feed into the lines and cause death or serious injury to workers nearby. Plug appliances or equipment into the generator only. If you want to use a portable generator, please call us first at **1-800-336-7343**.

### General electric safety

- ▶ Only qualified individuals should repair, maintain or operate electrical equipment.
- ▶ Stay away from water when using electrical equipment.
- ▶ Never touch electric appliances with wet hands or metal objects.
- ▶ Keep electrical cords away from heat sources, pedestrian traffic, and do not place them under rugs or mats. Replace, don't repair, worn or frayed electrical cords.
- ▶ Unplug appliances before washing, making repairs, or when not in use.



- ▶ If an appliance emits smoke or sparks, or if you feel a light shock when using it, stop! Discard, repair or replace the device.
- ▶ Grasp the plug to disconnect an appliance from the socket. Do not pull the cord.
- ▶ Do not overload outlets with too many appliances or lamps.
- ▶ Use outlet safety covers if you have children.
- ▶ Keep electric heaters a safe distance from furniture, blankets, drapes and other flammable objects.
- ▶ Never hang clothes to dry on or near your heater.
- ▶ Stay away from overhead electric lines and other electrical equipment.
- ▶ Stay away from the large green transformer boxes you may see in your neighborhood. If you find a transformer box unlocked or open, call SDG&E at **1-800-411-7343** immediately.

### When working around overhead electric lines:

- ▶ Do not touch the lines.
- ▶ Keep all machinery and equipment (scaffolding, tools, pool skimmers, metal ladders, etc.) at least 10 feet away.
- ▶ Call SDG&E at **1-800-411-7343** if it appears lines are in your way.
- ▶ Never remove anything caught in electric lines – not even an animal.
- ▶ Never fly kites and metallic balloons near electric lines and if your kite gets caught in an electric line, do not try to remove it.

### Home electrical inspection

Have an electrical inspection when you buy or remodel a house, especially one that's over 25 years old. If your home needs to be re-wired, don't overload the inadequate wiring in the meantime. Stagger your use of electric appliances, unplug appliances that you don't use all the time, and don't plug more than two cords into any outlet.

## Underground electric and gas line safety

Some electric and gas lines are underground. To avoid an accident, call our Underground Dig Alert Service at **811** for someone to come and mark where lines are buried.



## Staying safe with natural gas

### How to recognize a pipeline leak

It's important to keep in mind that natural gas is flammable and that something as simple as a spark can serve as an ignition source. Use your sense of sight, hearing and smell and any of the following signs to alert you to the presence of a gas leak:

#### 🎯 LOOK

- ▶ Dirt or water being blown in the air.
- ▶ Dead or dying vegetation (in an otherwise moist area) over or near pipeline areas.
- ▶ A fire or explosion near a pipeline.
- ▶ Exposed pipeline after an earthquake, fire, flood or other disaster.

#### 👂 LISTEN

- ▶ An unusual sound, such as a hissing, whistling or roaring sound near a pipeline.

#### 👃 SMELL

- ▶ The distinctive odor\* of natural gas.

*\* Some people may not be able to smell the odor because they have a diminished sense of smell, olfactory fatigue [normal, temporary inability to distinguish an odor after prolonged exposure to it] or because the odor is being masked or hidden by other odors that are present, such as cooking, damp, musty or chemical odors. In addition, certain conditions in pipes and soil can cause odor fade – the loss of odorant so that it is not detectable by smell.*

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## » *Staying safe with natural gas* (continued)

### General gas safety

- ▶ Have gas appliances inspected every year by a licensed professional or SDG&E.
- ▶ Do not store anything near a gas appliance that might interfere with normal airflow.
- ▶ Never use or store combustible and flammable items or products in the same room or near any gas or heat-producing appliances.
  - Flammable products include gasoline, spray paints, solvents, insecticide, cleaning products and other pressurized containers.
  - Combustible products include rags, mops, paper and other materials that can quickly catch fire.
- ▶ Do not use your oven, range or outdoor barbecue to heat your home.
- ▶ Open the fireplace/chimney damper completely when operating decorative gas fireplace logs.

### Water heaters

Gas water heaters have a main burner flame and a pilot light flame, which can ignite flammable vapors. Do not install a water heater where flammable products will be stored or used.

- ▶ Water heaters installed in garages must be elevated a minimum of 18 inches above the floor.
- ▶ Improperly secured water heaters can move or topple during an earthquake. Strap the heater to a wall stud.

Lower water temperature to prevent scalding. Water temperature above 125° F can cause severe burns or even death.

### Unvented gas heaters

Using an unvented natural gas, propane or kerosene space heater or fireplace is unsafe and dangerous. These devices are not approved for home use and violate California Health and Safety Code.

### Handling gas emergencies

Leaking gas from any damaged pipeline or gas meter could cause a fire, explosion, property damage and serious bodily injury.

#### Follow these guidelines if you encounter a leaking gas pipe or meter:

- ▶ **IMMEDIATELY** and **SAFELY EVACUATE** the area from a safe location, call SDG&E at **1-800-411-7343** 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- ▶ **CALL 911** promptly after leaving the area if the damage results in a natural gas leak that may endanger life or cause bodily harm or damage to property.
- ▶ **DO NOT** light a match, candle, or cigarette.
- ▶ **DO NOT** turn electrical devices on or off, including light switches.
- ▶ **DO NOT** start an engine or use any device, including a telephone, which could cause a spark.
- ▶ **DO NOT** attempt to control the leak or repair the damaged pipe or meter. Do not use or turn off any equipment that could cause a spark. Motorized or electrically powered equipment or vehicles may create an ignition source if a gas leak is present. Safely abandon any motorized or powered equipment or vehicles. Gas leaking from a plastic pipe can create static electricity that can ignite the gas.



### Know the warning signs of carbon monoxide

When incomplete combustion occurs in the gas appliances in your home, carbon monoxide is produced, and this can lead to carbon monoxide poisoning. You can't see, taste or smell carbon monoxide, but you *can* learn the warning signs:

- ▶ A yellow, large and unsteady burner flame (except in decorative logs with gas flames).
- ▶ Built-up soot in the appliance.
- ▶ An unusual, pungent odor caused by the same process that produces carbon monoxide.
- ▶ Triggering of a carbon monoxide detector or alarm (state law requires carbon monoxide devices in homes).
- ▶ Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include unexplained nausea, drowsiness, mental confusion or flu-like symptoms, such as headaches, dizziness, vomiting or shortness of breath.

**Take the following steps** if you think you've been exposed to carbon monoxide:

- ▶ Immediately turn off the suspected gas appliance, if it's safe to do so.
- ▶ Get everyone out of the house and call **911**.
- ▶ Seek medical attention for anyone who feels ill.
- ▶ Call immediately for an inspection of the appliance by a licensed, qualified heating or plumbing contractor or, if you're an SDG&E gas customer, call **1-800-411-7343**.
- ▶ Don't use the appliance until your contractor or SDG&E confirms it's safe.

Carbon monoxide alarms are required in every home under the *Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Prevention Act*. Perform routine maintenance on your gas appliances and carbon monoxide alarm, replacing the alarm every 3-5 years to ensure proper functioning.

### Ranges and ovens

Improper use or poor maintenance of a gas range or stove can result in carbon monoxide poisoning, oxygen depletion and fire.

- ▶ Never use your range or oven to heat your home. These appliances are not designed for this purpose.
- ▶ Prevent grease fires by keeping the burners and range top clean. Excess grease can create a fire hazard.

### Furnace safety

Maintain your furnace to keep it operating efficiently and protect against carbon monoxide poisoning, excessive heat and fire. Different types of furnaces require different kinds of care:

- ▶ Avoid lint build up. Vacuum floor furnaces regularly.
- ▶ Keep children away. The furnace grill can become very hot.
- ▶ Do not cover or block. Avoid placing rugs, furniture or combustible items over the grill as this can block airflow and cause a fire.

### Wall furnaces

- ▶ Maintain burners. Clean the burner compartment of built-in vented wall furnaces once a month during the heating season.

### Central gravity furnaces

- ▶ Clean the furnace heat register. Keep it free of lint and dust.
- ▶ Maintain unobstructed flow. Do not place items nearby that might stop or prevent airflow.
- ▶ Avoid fire hazards. Keep combustible items such as newspaper or cleaning equipment away.
- ▶ Check the filter. During heating season, check the filter on a monthly basis and clean or replace when necessary.
- ▶ Maintain a safe front-panel door position. Ensure the front-panel door of the furnace always fits snugly.

Never operate the furnace without the front-panel door properly in place to reduce the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

For more information visit [sdge.com/safety](http://sdge.com/safety).

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