



# Natural Gas and Electric Safety Guide



We just want  
you to be safe.

Customer Service 800-227-9187

Know the smell  
of natural gas.

Scratch  
&  
Sniff

Natural gas is colorless and odorless. Avista adds Mercaptan to give it a rotten egg odor.

## Gas safety

**Avista's  
natural gas  
system**

It takes a large system of underground pipelines to bring natural gas right to your home or business. Federal and state codes extensively regulate natural gas pipelines for public safety. At Avista, we do our part by routinely monitoring and maintaining our natural gas facilities to ensure safety.



## Why are we on your property?

From time to time, Avista workers need access to your property to complete regular natural gas system maintenance. This may include leak surveys, pipeline patrolling, meter inspections, meter changeouts or other procedures. Please ensure your meter is easily accessible at all times (especially important in case of a gas emergency). We just want to keep you safe.

## Recognizing a gas leak

Natural gas leaks don't happen often but can be dangerous. Colorless, odorless and lighter than air, natural gas can become combustible when mixed with air and exposed to an ignition source. Fortunately, staying safe is as easy as using your nose, ears and eyes.



Smell

We add a sulfur-like, rotten-egg stench, so you'll know right away if there's a problem.



Hear

Gas can hiss or even roar as it escapes from pipes.



See

Gas may make bubbles, blow dirt and/or kill plants when leaking from underground pipes.

## If you notice a natural gas leak

- Leave the area by going upwind.
- If you're indoors, get outside fast.
- Do not use a phone, flip a switch or do anything that may cause a spark.
- At a neighbor's house or from a safe distance, call 911 and Avista Customer Service at **800-227-9187**.

## Guard against carbon monoxide

When natural gas is not burned properly, say, because of a faulty furnace, it can emit carbon monoxide (CO), a colorless, odorless gas that can cause flu-like symptoms and even death. Be alerted when CO is present. Install a UL-listed carbon monoxide detector.

## Carbon monoxide symptoms

If you notice some or all of these symptoms and suspect carbon monoxide poisoning, move to fresh air immediately and call 911.

- Headache
- Flushed skin color
- Dizziness
- Shortness of breath
- Fatigue
- Nausea and vomiting
- Confusion
- Blurry or double vision
- Chest pain



## Preventing CO poisoning

Malfunctioning appliances are often the cause of carbon monoxide poisoning, so ask a qualified technician to service your heating system, water heater and other gas, oil, wood or coal-burning heaters and appliances periodically. Ensure there is adequate ventilation, too.

## Responding to an outdoor natural gas leak

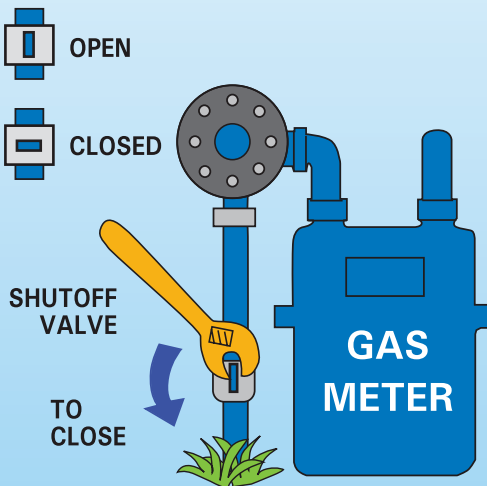
Puncturing a natural gas line could injure or kill you and others. If a line is severed and gas is escaping, follow these guidelines:

- Avoid any action that may create a spark.
- Do NOT start vehicles, flip switches on or off, or make or hang up calls near the area.
- Do NOT attempt to crimp or bend the pipe (this may create a spark from the static electricity present).
- Do NOT attempt to shut off any pipeline valves.
- Evacuate the area on foot, heading upwind.
- Alert others to evacuate and keep people away.
- Call 911 from a safe distance to report the emergency.
- Call and report the event to Avista at 800-227-9187.
- Wait for emergency responders and Avista to arrive.

## Natural disasters

In major emergencies, such as an earthquake or flood, you should know how to shut off your home's natural gas service. Using a large wrench, give the valve on the meter a quarter turn in either direction. When the valve runs crossways to the pipe, the line is closed. Only turn off your gas if you smell or hear a gas leak, or if your residence sustains major damage. **Never turn the gas back on yourself.** Report the issue by calling Avista Customer Service at **800-227-9187**. Let trained personnel handle it. Avista will implement our emergency plan to ensure the safety of affected areas. If a storm exposes your natural gas lines due to flooding or high winds (e.g., when a tree is ripped up by the roots), please contact Avista. We just want you to be safe.

NOTE: Avista does not install earthquake valves, which go on the customer side of the meter. These can be optionally installed by a qualified plumber of your choice.



## Natural gas safety checklist

To help prevent accidents in your home and keep your family safe, follow these general tips:

### Indoors

- Have a qualified technician periodically inspect your natural gas appliances to ensure they are operating correctly and are properly vented.
- Clear the area around your furnace and water heater. Keep all items a minimum of 5 feet away.
- Remove all combustible liquids and materials that are stored near gas appliances.
- Instruct children to stay away from gas-burning appliances and to not swing from gas lines or play on meters.
- Clean your natural gas range and oven to avoid grease fires.
- Purchase carbon monoxide detectors for every floor and install according to manufacturer's directions.

### Outdoors

- Keep dirt or debris from collecting under or around your gas meter to prevent corrosion and leaks.
- Carefully clear away snow and ice from the meter during winter months, being careful not to damage the components.
- Make sure no objects are placed on or against the meter. (No animals should be tied to it, either.)
- Make sure your meter is protected from possible vehicle collisions.
- Call 811 **at least two business days** before you dig to have underground utilities marked (free service for Avista residential customers). Privately owned lines can be located for a fee.
- Call Avista before you or a professional attempt to unblock a sewer drain.
- Identify the gas valve on your gas meter in the event you need to shut off your natural gas during a major emergency. (Make sure you keep a large enough wrench at home.)

NOTE: An earthquake survival tool that is specifically made to shut off the gas valve can be purchased at most hardware stores. The cost is typically under \$5.



SAFETY IS IN YOUR HANDS.  
EVERY DIG. EVERY TIME.

## Call 811 before you dig

Anyone who plans to break ground with a shovel, auger or excavating equipment must call 811 at least two full business days before you dig—it's the law. An expert representing your utility and other service providers will come mark the approximate location of all buried lines that are owned by them. This service is free; however, privately owned lines are not included (see illustration). The property owner will need to hire a private utility locator to find and mark these lines, which does cost a fee.

The property owner must hire a private utility locator to locate private underground lines on private property. Private lines are the responsibility of the property owner, not the utility or service provider.

Primary power and gas will be marked by the utilities.

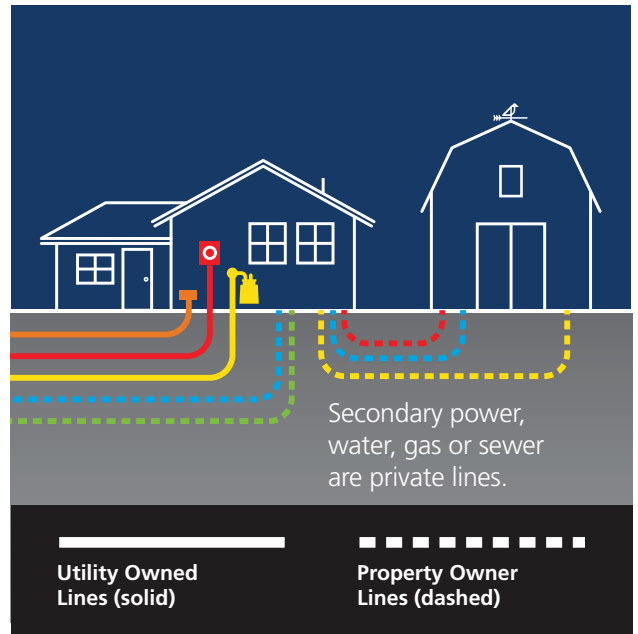
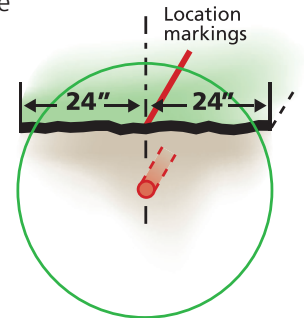
Water lines from the meter, and sewer from the street to the house, are private lines.

Phone/Cable      Gas      Water  
Electric      Sewer

## Call 811 before you dig checklist

Never disturb the ground until you complete these steps:

- Use **white paint** to mark the zone where you plan to dig. (Use pink paint if the area is covered by snow.)
- Call 811 and wait for all utility representatives listed on your locate ticket to mark their facilities.
- Maintain and respect these locate marks/flags. (See below: If your locate ticket expires, you must call in for a new locate.)
- Hand dig within the 24-inch tolerance zone to expose the marked/flagged utility (see graphic depiction).



## Ground mark identification

Ground markings are in different colors to indicate the approximate locations and types of utility facilities buried below. Valid timeframes for locate tickets:

WA - 45 days

ID - 28 days

OR - 45 days

You are required to call 811 to update your ticket in order to continue digging past the listed times.

ELECTRIC: RED

GAS-OIL: YELLOW

COMMUNICATION: ORANGE

WATER: BLUE

SEWER: GREEN

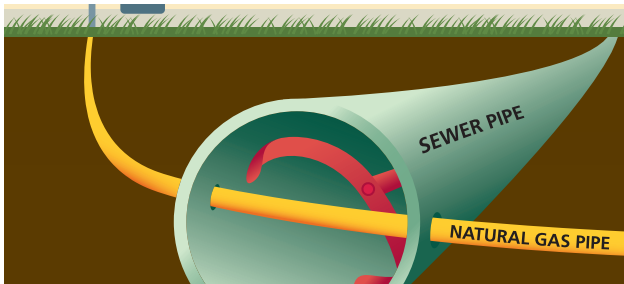
TEMPORARY SURVEY: PINK

IRRIGATION: PURPLE

PROPOSED EXCAVATION: WHITE

## If you damage a line

- If you hit or nick an electric or natural gas line, immediately notify Avista customer service at **800-227-9187**.
- If you damage a pipeline and natural gas is escaping, **DO NOT FOLD OVER THE PIPE** to stop the leak. This can cause a static charge that can ignite the gas. Walk upwind a safe distance away, then call 911 and Avista.



## Unblocking a sewer

On rare occasions, buried natural gas lines have unintentionally been installed through undetected sewer pipes. These natural gas lines can be severed by a sewer-clearing tool, which could cause a gas leak and lead to a fire or explosion. Before clearing a blocked sewer, call Avista. We'll send out a technician at no cost to make sure it's safe.

## Excess flow valve

An excess flow valve (EFV) is a device that automatically restricts the flow of natural gas if an underground pipeline is punctured or severed during excavation. EFVs have been installed on most new and replaced natural gas customer services since 2008. Existing natural gas customers without an EFV on their natural gas service may elect to have one installed at the customer's expense. For more information, visit [myavista.com/resngsafety](https://myavista.com/resngsafety).

## Never build over gas and electric lines

Never build any type of structure over buried utility lines or where it will block access to meters. Doing so runs a serious safety risk and prevents Avista from maintaining the infrastructure that serves customers.

## General pipeline markers (Not a substitute for calling 811)

Some of Avista's major distribution pipelines for natural gas have aboveground yellow markers along their routes, each displaying a 24-hour emergency response phone number. **THESE YELLOW MARKERS ONLY INDICATE THE PRESENCE OF BURIED NATURAL GAS LINES** and may not be posted above the actual pipelines. You are still required by law to have pipelines located and marked by calling 811 at least two business days before you dig. Transmission pipeline maps by county and zip code that show the names of pipeline operators are available by registering at <https://www.npms.phmsa.dot.gov>.



# Electric safety

## Avista's Washington and Idaho electric system

Avista operates more than 21,000 miles of electric transmission and distribution lines—some visible up on utility poles, others buried underground. For reliability and public safety, Avista routinely monitors and maintains these lines, substations and other electric equipment to meet federal and state regulations.

### Construction safety near power lines

- Never climb a power line structure under any circumstance. It is dangerous and illegal.
- Never undertake construction activity within 20 feet of an overhead power line.
- Never dump rock, rubble or topsoil under an overhead power line. It reduces the ground clearance needed for safety.
- Stay away from fallen or low-hanging wires, as they can be very dangerous. Voltages and currents from power lines and electrical devices can even interfere with the operation of some cardiac pacemakers.

### Logging safety

- Do not cut trees so that they fall into power lines. Know your surroundings when cutting firewood. If a tree comes into contact with electric lines or equipment, call 911 and then call Avista at **800-227-9187**.
- Do not burn slash piles under a power line. Smoke can conduct electricity from power lines down to the ground and electrocute anyone nearby.

### Power line fire prevention

Avista takes a number of proactive steps to help minimize the risk of fires associated with power lines:

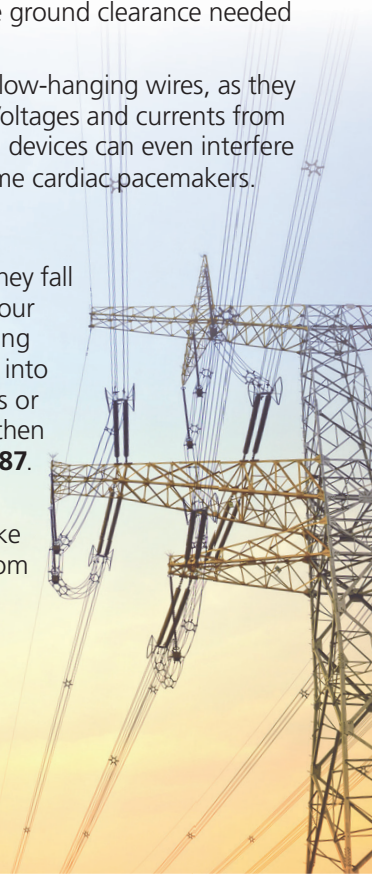
- Crews routinely respond to fire situations and outages, and we can send additional crews when a situation requires additional resources.
- We have an ongoing vegetation management program to help keep vegetation from coming into contact with energized power lines. It is important that property owners partner in this effort so that only compatible trees are planted under power lines. Tree size information is available by contacting Avista at **800-227-9187** or by contacting a certified arborist.
- During the summer, we temporarily change how we handle power outages in rural and forested areas when the region is very dry. In the event of an outage, we send personnel to physically inspect lines before placing them back in service. This requires more time to restore service but decreases potential fire danger. We return to normal operations as soon as dry conditions change.

It's important to note that these steps are not guaranteed to prevent every instance of a fire.

### Wildfire-season readiness

Avista closely monitors wildfires and can respond to any situation that may threaten transmission and distribution lines. We de-energize power lines at the request of emergency responders to protect firefighters and prevent additional fires.

If you experience a fire-related outage, power restoration will depend on when fire officials allow Avista crews to enter the fire zone and begin work.





## Look up and be safe

When working or playing outdoors, always be mindful of overhead power lines. You could easily come in contact with a line and be electrocuted by carrying a ladder, working on the roof or trimming trees. Long-handled tools used for cleaning the pool could touch a power line, too. Kids also need to watch out for power lines when climbing trees, flying kites and playing with water blasters/soakers. Anyone flying a drone should be careful as well.

## Downed power lines

Should you ever come across a downed power line (often knocked down by trees or branches during windstorms), get back and stay back. You should:

- Always assume the downed line is “hot” or energized.
- Never touch or move a downed line.
- Don’t try to move a person or object touching a downed line or you may also end up a victim.
- Move back as far away as possible—even the ground around a downed line can be dangerous.
- Avoid fences and other nearby objects, as they may be electrified when a power line falls on them.
- Keep others away and call 911 and then call Avista at **800-227-9187**.

## Vehicle entrapment

If a power line falls on your vehicle, stay inside. If others approach or attempt to help, remind them to stay away. Only if fire or smoke forces you to leave should you get out. However, never touch the vehicle and ground at the same time or stand with your legs apart. Jump as far as you can away from the vehicle and land with feet together. Keeping your feet together, shuffle away and don’t return to the vehicle until Avista says it’s safe.

## Home electrical fires

In case of an electrical fire, here are some important tips:

- Don’t touch an appliance that catches fire.
- Unplug the appliance (or shut off the breaker or pull the related fuse).
- Use an approved A-B-C-rated extinguisher to put out the fire. Never use water on an electrical fire as it can shock you.
- If you can’t control the fire, evacuate the premises and call 911 from a safe place.

## Avoiding shocks and burns

Electricity is safe and reliable when used properly, but it can be hazardous if used improperly. Always follow these safety tips:

- Keep appliances and electronics away from water.
- Don’t overload outlets with multiple plugs or power strips.
- Only use extension cords at their recommended rating.
- Never string two extension cords together or place under a rug.
- Cover your outlets with plastic safety caps if you have small children around.
- Never insert a metal object into an appliance, like your toaster.
- Avoid any contact with your electric system. Household gloves will not protect you.
- If an appliance has a worn cord, sparks or smokes, have it repaired or replaced.
- Unplug cords at the plug head.
- Install GFCI outlets in bathrooms, near kitchen sink, in garages, and for outdoor outlets.
- Use a licensed electrician for home improvement projects.
- If a fire sparks from an electrical outlet, evacuate the premises and call 911.



## Call to de-energize lines

If you ever find it necessary to do a project near an overhead line (such as trimming trees), Avista may be able to shut off service while you work. Call Avista ahead of time at **800-227-9187**.

## Power outages

You can report and track a power outage online or on a mobile device at [myavista.com/outage](https://myavista.com/outage). As we restore power, use these tips to stay safe:

- Turn off appliances that were on before the power went out.
- Never wire an emergency generator into your home's electrical system without a certified/ properly installed transfer switch. Back-feed from a generator can injure or kill Avista personnel.
- Never connect an extension cord from a power source directly into your home's electrical system and never use household cords outdoors.
- Put your generator outdoors away from the house and vents to avoid poisonous motor exhaust.
- Only use a generator to run specific appliances (never to re-energize your house).
- Never use an outdoor grill for heating or cooking indoors, as the fumes are toxic.

## Checking circuit breakers

For protection against fire and electrocution, every home's electrical system includes a fuse or breaker panel. Fuses "blow" and circuit breakers automatically "trip" to cut off power when a short circuit or power overload occurs. If this happens, restoring power is easy. Simply replace the burned-out fuse with a new one that has the same rating. Or, with circuit breakers, simply flip the tripped switch back to the "on" position. The power should return immediately. If the circuit continues to "trip" or "blow," call an electrician and have the circuit checked for proper operation.

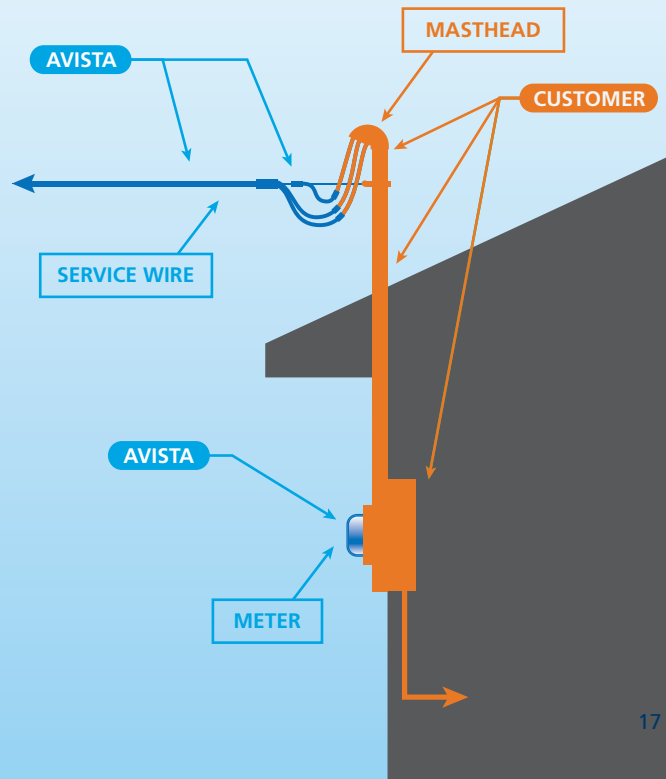
## Damage to customer-owned masthead

In some instances, Avista connects its power lines to homes through a masthead, an overhead piece of equipment that belongs to the homeowner

(see illustration below).

If your masthead is ever damaged, it may result in a power outage at your residence. This commonly happens during storms when a falling tree or branch lands on the service wire. It can bend or pull the masthead away from the house and break the wires to the electric meter.

Should this happen, we will have to shut off your power for safety reasons. Before we can turn the power back on, we must first ask you to please have a licensed electrician repair the masthead, as it belongs to you and is not part of Avista's electric system equipment.



## Electric safety checklist

### Indoors

- Never wire generator power directly into your home's electrical system unless there is a disconnect switch to separate generated power from Avista's distribution system.
- Use a generator to run specific appliances and locate it outside the home.
- Don't overload outlets with multiple plugs.
- Don't string together two extension cords.
- Remove any extension cords from under rugs.
- Don't touch an appliance that smokes, sparks or catches fire. Replace or repair it.
- Do not stick a utensil into a toaster.
- Purchase an A-B-C-rated fire extinguisher.
- Install child safety caps for outlets.
- Install GFCI outlets in garage, bathrooms, near kitchen sink and as outdoor outlets.
- Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in your home and fire extinguishers on every floor.
- Hire a licensed electrician for home improvements.
- Never use an outdoor grill for heating or cooking indoors, as the fumes are toxic.

### Outdoors

- Look up and around to avoid power lines.
- Remember to never touch a downed power line or other utility line; move far away and stay there.
- Avoid touching objects and people in contact with a downed line.
- Stay in your vehicle if it contacts a power line.
- If forced from the vehicle by smoke or fire, jump out and land with feet together; shuffle or hop away.
- Remind kids to never retrieve balls, kites or any other objects that go over a substation fence.
- Do not attach your fence to a substation fence.
- Never use an extension cord to bring power from a neighbor's house to your own.
- Don't use household extension cords outdoors.

## Be prepared in case of a long-duration power outage or natural disaster

Natural disasters can cause extended outages. It is important for you to know what to do in the case of a long-duration power outage.

### Power outage checklist

- Turn off all appliances that were on prior to the outage.
- Unplug computers and electronics unless you have a surge protector.
- Leave on a porch light so our crews will know when your power is restored.
- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed.
- Lower your thermostat setting.
- Wait a half hour after the power returns before resetting your thermostat.
- Always keep flashlights handy.
- Leave a light or radio on as an alert when power has been restored.

### Keep emergency supplies in one place.

- Non-perishable food and water for at least three days.
- Manual can opener.
- Personal hygiene items.
- Flashlights with fresh batteries.
- Portable, battery-powered radio.
- Prescription medicine(s) and medical equipment.
- Wind-up or battery-powered clock.
- Food and water for any pets.

### Plan for required medical needs.

- Be prepared to seek medical assistance if you experience a health-related emergency during a power outage.
- Prearrange staying with friends or relatives so you have somewhere to go if there is a power outage.
- Research whether a portable generator is appropriate for your situation. Visit a local hardware store or talk to a licensed electrical contractor to learn about options.
- Talk to your physician about alternative measures should your power be interrupted.

### Practice manually opening barriers.

- Electric garage door.
- Security doors.
- Electric gates.

## Safety matters

Avista wants to keep everyone safe. If your dwelling has occupants or tenants, keep them informed by asking us for more brochures. For additional information, visit [myavista.com](https://myavista.com) or call **800-227-9187**.

View helpful safety videos at:  
[myavista.com/safetyvideos](https://myavista.com/safetyvideos).

Если Вы хотели бы получить информацию о правилах безопасности на русском языке, пожалуйста звоните по телефону 800-227-9187.

Si desea recibir información en Español acerca de la seguridad, por favor llamar a: 800-227-9187.

For assistance with alternative languages, please call 800-227-9187.

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