

WYOMING

MAY • 2008

Volume 31, Number 2

ENERGY-SAVINGS TIP

Summer is the best time to have your home-heating equipment inspected by a qualified heating specialist. A professional inspection today will ensure your equipment is ready to operate safely and efficiently when the first cold snap hits this fall.

SAFETY TIP

Remove all flammable objects from around your furnace and water heater. Boxes, clothes, paints, aerosols, gasoline, motorized yard tools, and any other flammable products should not be stored near the furnace and water heater.



How does automated meter reading work?

Located between the dials on a gas meter and the meter itself is a small device called a transponder. The transponder keeps track of the gas going through the meter by sensing the meter dials turning. Then, when a specialized computer in the meter-reading truck drives by, the transponder sends the usage information it has stored to the computer.

With this technology, we are able to read meters 20 times faster than we did with our walking meter readers. Each year, transponders save us about \$7 million to \$9 million. Customers benefit from these lower costs through lower rates for gas service

But is the transponder accurate? Yes. Walking meter readers used to hand-write the gas usage and the figures were passed along for data entry. It wasn't uncommon for errors to occur more frequently because some numbers weren't legible and, in some cases, numbers were transposed in the

data-entry process. In addition, walking meter readers had to estimate about 5 percent of customers' bills because of inaccessible meters. Today, only about 1/2 of 1 percent are estimated.

As technology improves, we're able to detect and identify problems faster. We have been using a new computer software program that checks transponder accuracy in recording the movement of the meter dials. We found about 1/20th of 1 percent of the transponders were not accurately recording the movement of the dials. This is how we identified the meter errors recently reported in the media. We have apologized to the affected customers. We are now working with state regulators to resolve the billing problem. We want to assure customers that that 99.5 percent of our bills are accurate. They have never been more accurate. Our goal, as it has always been, is 100 percent accuracy.



Dealing with natural gas service after an earthquake

A common concern related to earthquakes is the potential effect on utility services such as natural gas service.

While no one can predict with absolute certainty how much damage an earthquake may cause, natural gas pipeline systems in many cases have proven remarkably resistant to earthquake-related damage. Most natural gas pipelines presently installed are made of high-strength steel or polyethylene plastic. These pipe materials are flexible enough to withstand significant earth movement without sustaining damage.

SECURE THE WATER HEATER

The most common type of damage to occur during an earthquake is from a

water heater tipping over. When full of water, these appliances are heavy and unstable. If they're not properly secured, they could tip over and possibly break both the water and gas lines. A secured water heater could reduce serious damage during an earthquake and provide a small reserve of clean water to draw from if water is limited.

KNOW WHEN TO TURN OFF THE GAS METER

It may not be necessary to turn off your natural gas meter after an earthquake. After the 1989 earthquake rattled the San Francisco Bay area, for example, 156,000 people turned off their gas meters. According to the natural gas utility serving the area, this

(Continued on back...)

Caring for kids



BUILDING BETTER BRAINS

- Help your children develop a sense of self worth.
- Focus on the positive in the learning process; avoid scolding or showing disappointment.
- Provide a stimulating environment in which children can play.
- Respect children's developmental stages. Don't expect too much too soon.
- Avoid doing things for children that they can do for themselves.
- Keep a success book in which you record your children's achievements.
- Read to your children.

This message provided www.preventchildabuse.info.

LOOKING FOR A SPEAKER?

Providing the right speaker to talk to your group (50 or more) about natural gas is easy for Questar

Gas. Keep us in mind next time you plan an emergency preparedness fair or presentation for your group.

Topics include:

- Earthquake preparedness
- Gas prices

Call (801) 324-5600 or visit questargas.com to schedule a presentation.



Dealing with natural gas service after an earthquake *(continued from front)*

was only necessary in about 2 percent of the cases. Since the meter should be turned on only by qualified persons, many customers waited several days before service was restored.

If this were the case in Utah, Wyoming or Idaho during the winter months, the prolonged lack of heat could cause additional problems. Without putting yourself in danger, you should turn off the natural gas meter after an earthquake **only** if you experience any of the following:

you smell natural gas,
you hear it leaking,
you have structural damage,
there's a fire, or
Questar makes the request.

For more information, go to www.questargas.com and view our "Earthquake Preparedness and Natural Gas" brochure. If you don't know what natural gas smells like, call 800-323-5517 and ask for our "Here's a Smell You Should Know Well" odorant brochure.



WARNING!

Dial 811 before you dig

Statistics show that about two-thirds of the damage to underground natural gas lines is caused by homeowners, contractors and other excavators who fail to ensure that underground utility lines are properly marked. If you're planning to plant a tree, install a fence or sprinkling system, or undertake any other project that requires digging or excavation, call One Call of Wyoming by dialing "811" at least two business days before you dig.



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

After you call, each participating utility will send a representative to mark its line locations for FREE. Wait two full business days (48 hours) to be sure all lines are marked, and make sure you understand where you can dig.

Also, take appropriate precautions when you dig. If you are outside and smell natural gas, call Questar Gas or an emergency number such as 911 from a telephone outside the area.



QUESTAR Gas