

PROPANE AND GAS SAFETY IN FLOODING CONDITIONS

Responding to a flammable gas emergency during normal conditions is one thing, but responding during a flood or in the aftermath of a hurricane can bring a completely different set of problems. The following include tips, resources, and things to consider if responding to natural gas and propane leaks or possible leaks during such conditions:

- Both propane and natural gas smell similar to rotten eggs, but each has a distinctively different odor. All first responders should know these smells.
- Be aware of hissing sounds, any confined areas of dead or dying vegetation, or water or dirt spraying or bubbling from the ground.
- Keep in mind that natural gas leaking from an underground pipeline may travel a significant distance from the leak before breaking the surface. Where you find the natural gas may not be where the leak is.
- Propane tanks can float if broken away from their anchor or pipe systems. Don't be surprised if emergency calls come in for tanks floating away.
- Underground propane storage tanks may float and break through the surface.
- Be aware that small grill or torch bottles can easily be hidden in debris.
- Many small grilles and patio torches use the small, 1 pound, propane cylinders. These cylinders are generally dark green and may be virtually invisible in storm debris.
- When approaching a propane tank, don't assume the resident has shut off the gas. To shut the main gas supply valve on the tank, turn it clockwise.
- Propane is heavier than air, but lighter than water. If there is a propane leak, the propane will pool in the lowest part of the structure.
- Natural gas is lighter than air and will dissipate rapidly. If the leak is inside, this will increase the levels and make combustion more likely.
- If there is a consumer accessible valve before the leak, turn it off.
- Unless specifically trained and authorized by the local "gas" company, do not attempt to close pipeline valves.

Propane cylinders and tanks



40 pound propane cylinder



500 gallon above ground propane tank



Underground propane tank. 250 gal to 1,000 gal sizes.

Underground storage tanks may float to the surface of the ground as seen on the left.

Natural Gas

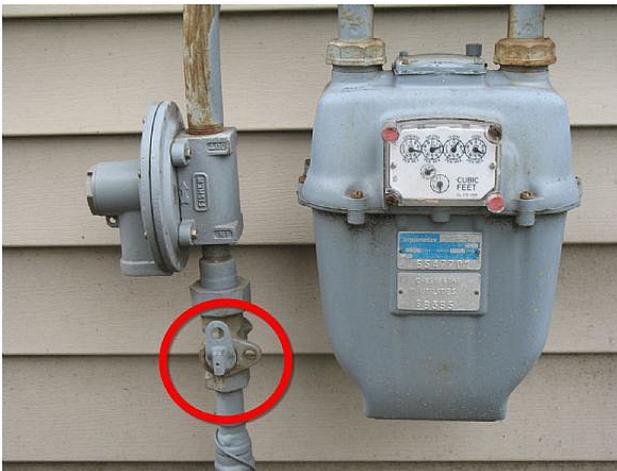


Natural gas bubbling through standing water



Dead / dying vegetation due to natural gas leak.

Natural Gas meters, regulators and shut-off valves



Valve is off when holes are aligned



Valve is off when tab is crossways to the pipeline



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