



*At Your
Service*

PROVIDING
ELECTRIC, GAS, WATER AND
SANITARY SEWER SERVICES

November 2018

Natural Gas Safety and Measures the Utilities Take

As winter approaches, usage of natural gas by customers of Hastings Utilities typically increases. Natural gas is used for a variety of purposes throughout the year but increasingly used for building heat during cold temperatures. In Hastings, the distribution network of natural gas mains receives a lot of scrutiny and many measures are used to help make the delivery of natural gas safe for local customers.

Hastings Utilities procures natural gas supplies in the open market for the eventual usage by local customers. The supplies of natural gas are brought to Hastings via interstate pipelines and they enter the local distribution system at two town "border stations." Once the natural gas enters the local series of gas mains it is then distributed to customers throughout the community.

There is no way around natural gas being a dangerous commodity if not properly used or handled. That is why Hastings Utilities takes a number of steps to make the natural gas system as safe as possible.

One major step is conducting "leak surveys." A "leak survey" is an activity where personnel go throughout the natural gas service area looking for any possible leaks from the system of distribution pipes. Currently, a complete town survey of all 183 miles of underground gas main lines and 193 miles of gas services lines is being performed and should be completed later this month. In its natural state, natural gas is both odorless and colorless. In order to detect potential leaks an odorant that smells like "rotten eggs" is injected into natural gas so people can be more aware if a leak may be occurring. Odorant tests are conducted in different parts of the service area each month to ensure that any natural gas leak would be readily detectable.

An indicator of how "tight" a system that is operated by Hastings Utilities is the "unaccountable" totals of distributing the natural gas supplies. HU knows how much commodity it purchases and can compare those amounts to what is being billed to the actual end user, whether industry, business or residential usage. During the past 15 years there has been zero unaccountable natural gas totals meaning there are no discernible leaks within the system.

Also helping to make for a secure system all cast iron pipe has been eliminated from the distribution system. Cast iron pipe was demonstrated to become brittle with age and more likely to crack causing leaks to occur. Also, there is no "bare steel" pipe in the system. All distribution piping is cathodically protected, which is a process that reduces the likelihood that the pipe will rust or otherwise corrode which could possibly threaten the pipe integrity.

Another factor that improves the overall safety of the system is system upgrades, or capital construction projects. These are projects that replace aging mains and infrastructure with newer, and sometimes, more modern materials. During the past four years approximately \$2.89 million in capital construction projects have taken place to the natural gas system alone.

Hastings Utilities also works to educate contractors and individuals to use the statewide One Call system to avoid striking natural gas lines when digging occurs. Anyone who is considering digging should contact the One Call system by dialing 811.

Department staff keeps meticulous records that are reviewed for compliance by the State of Nebraska Fire Marshall's department. Additionally, HU must also follow regulations and guidelines established by the federal government's Department of Transportation.

If you ever smell the "rotten eggs" odorant that is in natural gas supplies, immediately leave the residence or building and call 402-463-1371 anytime 24 hours-a-day, seven days a week.

Natural gas is a wonderful commodity that allows many to heat their homes, cook their food, heat their water and dry their clothes. It must always be respected for the potentially dangerous element that it is.

If you have any questions about the natural gas system operated by Hastings Utilities simply call 402-463-1371.

UTILITY BOARD

Jack Schreiner, *Chairman*
Bill Hitesman, *Vice Chairman*
Shayne Raitt
Shawn Hartmann · Joanne Seberg

UTILITIES MANAGER

Kevin Johnson



**HASTINGS
UTILITIES**

*P.O. Box 289 • 1228 N. Denver
Hastings, NE 68902 • 402-463-1371
www.hastingsutilities.com*