

Natural Gas

Toolbox Talk #33

Natural gas isn't what occurs after pizza night, it's actually a naturally occurring flammable gas found underground primarily consisting of methane and other hydrocarbons. Like other fossil fuels when it does not burn completely it produces carbon monoxide. In its natural state this gas has no odor, color, or taste; however, energy companies add a substance which makes the gas smell like rotten eggs to assist in detecting leaks. Common sources of natural gas in the workplace include furnaces, water heaters, grills, blocked vents, generators, and gas space heaters. In addition to carbon monoxide, because natural gas is flammable it is also associated with risks for fire and/or explosions.

- Dead or discolored vegetation in an otherwise green area
- Abnormally dry/hardened soil
- Continuous bubbling in wet or flooded area
- Dust blowing from a hole in the ground
- Flames (if ignited)

- A blowing or hissing sound

- Odor of rotten eggs

Whenever a substance containing carbon burns incompletely, the result is carbon monoxide. This poisonous gas is dangerous because it effectively blocks oxygen molecules from binding to blood cells. As more and more blood cells are hijacked by carbon monoxide molecules your brain, heart, and other organs stop getting the oxygen that they need. A loss of consciousness may happen in a matter of minutes, followed later by suffocation. Carbon monoxide poisoning can be reversed if caught in time, but may result in permanent damage to the heart, brain, and reproductive organs.

