

Ameren Illinois issues natural gas safety tips for the winter heating months

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ALTON – With frigid temperatures striking since early November and the potential for what is being tossed around as “Snowmageddon 2019” slated for this weekend, many people are in the peak season for heating their homes.

For those utilizing natural gas, Ameren Illinois has sent a release full of safety tips and emergency protocols to media outlets to remind its customers of how to stay safe this winter. As many as 816,000 people in Illinois utilize Ameren's natural gas service, which includes 18,300 miles of transmission and distribution pipelines. While Ameren Illinois describes their delivery systems as both safe and reliable, accidents and leaks can occur for a variety of reasons. To properly educate customers in how to deal with these potential mishaps, Ameren Illinois has some tips for people in case they smell that artificially added (as natural gas has no natural odor) “rotten egg” sulfuric smell indicating a gas leak.

Outside of the smell, customers are asked to be aware of the possibilities of bubbling water or blowing dirt around the gas meter. If the smell or these signs are present, customers are warned to evacuate the premises immediately without flipping light switches, using electronics or even closing doors. Anything that could generate a spark is explicitly advised against.

Once the individual has left the area, Ameren Illinois states to call its gas leak line at (800) 755-5000. Crews will respond within an hour, and the usual time to a call is 22 minutes. This line is operating and crews are available 24/7/365.

Besides pipes springing leaks, other causes of gas leaks include old brass stoves with currently-banned brass connectors, piping connections and accidental contact with gas lines during digging.

Crews arriving at the scene will do both a visual inspection and a check of the gas meter. If a leak is confirmed, they are trained to ensure the scene is safe. First responders may also arrive on the scene, as Ameren Illinois works closely with them in an effort to ensure the safety of the lives and property of their customers.

To prevent gas leaks, people are asked to call 811 before they dig, ensure their stove connectors are up-to-date, have their furnace inspected yearly, never use a gas stove or range top as a space heater, avoid storing flammable products near the natural gas water heater or furnace.