

Smell gas? - Call 0800 111 999

1. The safe use of gas appliances and other gas fittings

It's important to know about the safe use of gas appliances and other gas fittings because if they haven't been properly installed or maintained, this could lead to gas leaks and carbon monoxide poisoning.

- Do not use any gas appliances that you think are not working properly.
- Make sure that ventilation bricks, grilles or outside flues are never covered or blocked.
- Make sure you have your gas appliances serviced at least once a year by a Gas Safe RegisterTM engineer.
- Fit a carbon monoxide detector.
- Do not allow unqualified people to install or maintain your appliance.

If you smell gas or suspect a gas leak:

- Check if the pilot light has gone out. If any gas appliances have been left on, turn them off. If the pilot light is still on and your gas appliances are all off, there may be a gas escape.
- Turn the main gas emergency control valve on the pipe leading into the meter to the 'OFF' position. The supply is off when the ridged line on the spindle is across the pipe.
- **Call the National Gas Emergency Number on 0800 111 999.** Do not phone from a mobile phone as this may ignite a spark. Use a neighbour's phone, or take a mobile phone outdoors, to call the emergency services.
- Open doors and windows to clear the gas.
- Do not turn light switches on or off, use doorbells, mobile phones, or any other electrical switches.
- Do not smoke, light a match or use any other kind of naked flame.
- Do not leave it to someone else to call – you could be putting yourself or others at risk.

2. The dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning

Carbon monoxide is a colourless, odourless, tasteless gas which is produced when carbon-based fuels (gas, oil, wood or coal) aren't burnt properly and there is insufficient air or ventilation in the room. You can't see it. You can't taste it. You can't smell it. But carbon monoxide is very poisonous and can kill without warning in just a matter of hours. You are particularly vulnerable when you are asleep.

The symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning can be similar to flu - you may suffer from headaches, nausea, drowsiness, dizziness and pains in the chest and stomach that appear to get better when you are away from the area.

Carbon monoxide is often produced by appliances which have been incorrectly installed or maintained. Signs to look out for include yellow or orange flames, soot or stains around the appliance and pilot lights which frequently blow out, but these signs are not conclusive. For a check to see if you are affected, ask yourself:

- Is more than one person in the house affected?
- Do the symptoms ease or disappear when you are away from the house but recur on returning home?
- Are the symptoms related to the use of a fuel burning appliance?
- Are the symptoms worse in winter, when the heating is in use?

If an appliance is emitting carbon monoxide and you have been exposed recently, go to hospital and tell them you believe you have been poisoned by carbon monoxide. They will need to determine your carboxyhaemoglobin level with a blood test. You should be treated as an emergency case, so it is a good idea to take someone with you.

More information on carbon monoxide awareness is available from:

- www.co-bealarmed.co.uk - CO Be Alarmed, a campaign backed by victims' charities, professional organisations and energy companies
- www.hse.gov.uk/gas/domestic/co.htm - Health and Safety Executive website
- www.becarbonmonoxideaware.com - Carbon Monoxide Consumer Awareness Alliance (COCAA)

3. The benefits of fitting an audible carbon monoxide alarm

A carbon monoxide detector alerts you to carbon monoxide being present in your home and we strongly recommend you use one,

regardless of whether you have an oil, gas or wood burning boiler, water heater or cooker. You can be particularly at risk from carbon monoxide poisoning when you are asleep and having an audible detector could alert you and save your life. However, it shouldn't be regarded as a substitute for the proper installation and maintenance of gas appliances by a Gas Safe Register™ engineer.

Before purchasing a carbon monoxide alarm, make sure it complies with British Standard EN 50291 and carries a British or European approval mark, such as a Kitemark. Carbon monoxide detectors should be installed, checked and serviced in line with the manufacturer's instructions.

4. The benefits of gas safety checks

Having a gas safety check will reduce the risk of gas leaks and the danger of carbon monoxide poisoning.

All gas appliances and (if applicable) related flues and other gas fittings should be checked and serviced every 12 months to ensure they are kept in a safe and useable state. Any work should be carried out by Gas Safe Register™ engineers who must hold a valid certificate of competence for each work activity that they wish to undertake, which is certified by The National Accredited Certification Scheme for Individual Gas Fitting Operatives (ACS).

All gas appliances and other gas fittings must be installed in accordance with The Gas Safety (Installation & Use) Regulations, building regulations and manufacturer's installation instructions. Installations should also comply with British Standards and Regulations for electrical installations.

It's just as important to get your boiler and other appliances checked if you use other carbon based fuels, such as coal, wood or oil. Make sure that any chimneys or flues aren't blocked up and that vents aren't covered. You should also get your chimney swept at least once a year.

5. Our obligations for arrangement of gas safety checks

If you're an Ecotricity Green Gas customer you're entitled to a free gas safety check – all you have to do is ask and we'll arrange it for you.

We carry out gas safety checks every 12 months for you if:

- You live with at least one five year old or younger
- You're of pensionable age, disabled or chronically sick; and either lives alone or with other similar individuals
- You're in receipt of a means tested benefit
- Had your last check more than 12 months ago.

If you are a tenant, your landlord has a legal duty to carry out an annual gas safety check and maintain gas appliances. They must also provide you with a copy of the completed gas safety check certificate.

All checks are free of charge and carried out by experienced people. They include safety checks on gas appliances and fittings, including the gas meter.

Each year we'll send our gas customers information on the following, you can request it too:

- Using gas appliances safely
- Dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning
- The benefits of fitting an audible carbon monoxide alarm
- The benefits of gas safety checks
- Advice for you, if your gas appliances are condemned as a result of a safety check.

On request, we will carry out a free gas safety check on your gas appliances and other gas fittings every year. This does not replace the need for regular servicing, but will give you additional peace of mind about the safety of your gas appliances.

The gas safety check will be conducted by a Gas Safe Register™ engineer who will check if your gas appliances and fittings, including the gas meter, are safe to use and aren't giving out harmful carbon monoxide.

If you think you qualify for a free gas safety check, please call us on 0345 555 7 100 and we'll send you a Priority Services Registration Form.

6. Where to seek advice if gas appliances are condemned as a result of a gas safety check

The Gas Safe Register™ engineer who carries out the gas safety check will determine if your gas appliance is unsafe, explaining why and record this in legible writing. Key words to look out for are: condemned, spillage, carbon monoxide and blockage. Some engineers carry a multi fuel gas analyser which will report what is being emitted from the condemned appliance – keep this reading if you can.

If an appliance fails a gas safety check, a red warning notice will be placed on it. It's an offence for anyone other than a Gas Safe™ Register engineer to remove this. The engineer will advise you how your appliance can be repaired if it's condemned and you can also look for more information at www.gassaferegister.co.uk.

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