

INTRODUCTION

SECTION I WELCOME TO CONSUMERS GAS COMPANY

Thank you for being a natural gas customer of Consumers Gas Company. It is our goal to supply you and service your account in the most efficient way possible. We are here to serve you and hope that you have a great experience working with us. This handbook is issued by Consumers Gas Company to answer most questions you may have about your natural gas service. It is designed to inform you of the policies and procedures of Consumers Gas Company. However, if you have a question and can't find the answer here, please feel free to give us a call. Consumers Gas Company serves three counties which are White, Gallatin and Edwards, with offices in Carmi and Albion.

TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Consumers Gas Company's business office hours are:

Carmi Office: 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Monday thru Friday.
Phone: 618-382-4158 or toll free 1-800-322-4158

Albion Office: 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Monday thru Friday
Phone: 618-445-3012

Emergency after Hours, Weekends and Holidays
618-382-4158 or toll free 1-800-322-4158

Call Before You Dig
(Free Mark-Out of Utility Lines)
JULIE at 811 or toll-free number 1-800-892-0123

Consumers Gas Company's Addresses

Carmi Office
216 Industrial Ave
PO Box 486
Carmi IL 62821

Albion Office
30 N 4th St
Albion, IL 62806

www.consumersgascompany.com

SECTION II NATURAL GAS FACTS & TIPS

IF YOU SMELL GAS

Natural gas is lighter than air and has no odor. To help you detect the presence of natural gas, a strong odorant that smell like rotten eggs is added. If you smell this odor:

1. Exit the building immediately
2. Do not use matches, lighters, electrical switches, appliances or your telephone.
3. Call from a nearby building by dialing 618-382-4158 or toll free 1-800-322-4158. Do not re-enter the building until Consumers Gas Company has declared it safe.

We urge you to call us the first time you smell the odor of natural gas. Consumers Gas Company personnel will be happy to assist you. This service is provided free, 7 days a week, 24 hours a day.

CALL BEFORE YOU DIG

Before you dig any hole in the street or your yard call JULIE at 811 or toll-free at 1-800-892-0123, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. It's a free service to mark-out underground water, sewer, electric, cable T.V. and gas utility lines. You must call **two working days** prior to digging or excavating. Help prevent damage to property or injury by making the call **before** you dig.

SAFETY TIPS

- * For your safety. Never use your oven or range to heat your home.
- * Gas fireplaces and space heaters are meant for added warmth, not a main source of heating. Remember to turn these appliances off before you go to bed or leave your home.
- * Hot water can be dangerous and cause serious burns. If your hot water is above 125 degrees, it's too hot! To avoid a potential accident, lower your water heater thermostat setting to 125 degrees or less.
- Know your meter location and keep the area free of snow and ice. Use a broom to remove snow from your meter. Exercise care when shoveling, plowing or snow blowing in the area around your meter. Exercise care when shoveling, plowing or snow blowing in the area around your meter.
- Your natural gas appliances should have a clear, steady blue flame. Small amounts of yellow and orange are normal and may occur occasionally. Be sure to schedule a service call by a heating contractor if your appliance is not operating in this manner.
- If you wish to insulate your natural gas water heater, please be sure to choose an insulation blanket manufactured specifically for natural gas water heaters.
- Change the filter on your furnace at least once a year. Dust and pet hair can collect and block the airflow.
- Do not store flammable material or materials with flammable vapors near gas appliances.
- Before pouring concrete around meter set, call your local office or 1-800-322-4158.
- Never attach electrical grounding wires to gas piping inside or outside your house. Consult with a licensed electrician.

TUNE UP YOUR HEATING SYSTEM

Keep the area around your furnace and water heater clear. It's important to have your heating equipment checked for safety and efficiency. When your gas fired appliances don't work right, they may produce carbon monoxide: a colorless, odorless and potentially dangerous gas.

CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING

Learn to recognize the signs of carbon monoxide poisoning: headaches, dizziness, nausea, confusion, weakness, vision or hearing impairment and drowsiness. If you notice these symptoms and suspect that carbon monoxide is the cause, you should:

1. Get some fresh air immediately
2. Contact Consumers Gas Company
3. *Seek* medical help

Avoid carbon monoxide poisoning. Check for these indications that your heating system requires service:

1. The presence of soot or carbon deposits on your heating equipment
2. Clogged chimneys and flues
3. Rusted or rotted flues

HELP PREVENT HEATING SYSTEM PROBLEMS

- * Do not cover floor vents with rugs
- * Have a qualified professional check your natural gas appliances once a year
- * Keep all external vents and chimneys unblocked and free from debris
- * Use external vents for all gas appliances where appropriate
- * Keep the area around your furnace clear
- * Make sure your chimney and flue are inspected and cleaned of residues if you recently converted your heating system from oil to natural gas.

If you have no heat and all other appliances are not functioning, call Consumers Gas Company immediately. We will respond as soon as possible. If you choose not to call Consumers Gas Company and decide to call a private repair service to fix the problem, we will not be responsible for any charges you incur.

If you smell gas exit the building immediately. Call your local Consumers Gas Company office from a nearby telephone. If after hours call 618-382-4158 or 1-800-322-4158.

CHECK YOUR HEATING SYSTEM

Don't wait for the first cold snap of autumn to find out your natural gas heating system is not working. Instead, have it serviced annually by a Heating Contractor during the warmer months to ensure safe and efficient operation when the cold weather arrives.

CONSERVE ENERGY

Conservation may reduce your energy bills and helps preserve the environment. Here are some tips to help make your home more energy efficient and comfortable:

- * Install low flow shower heads to reduce water use.
- * Insulate ceilings and sidewalls to keep heat inside your home.
- * Weather strip and caulk around doors and windows
- * Install and maintain storm windows and doors
- * Tune-up your furnace for the winter and change your filters regularly
- * Keep your thermostat at the lowest comfortable setting
- * Close your fireplace damper when the fire is out
- * Turn your water heater down to a low or medium setting
- * Fix leaky faucets that waste energy and water

SECTION III

NATURAL GAS SERVICES

TO APPLY FOR GAS SERVICE

If you are not already a Consumers Gas Company customer, to request service stop in at your local Consumers Gas Company office located in Carmi or Albion, IL. Each month your bill will include a facility charge for each meter on your account, regardless of gas usage. When applying for service you will need a picture ID or Driver's license. If renting you will also need a current rent receipt.

TO TRANSFER YOUR SERVICE

If you plan to relocate and need to transfer your natural gas service, stop in at your local Consumers Gas Company business office, with a picture ID or Driver's license, and a current rent receipt if renting. We want to help make your move run smoothly.

TO DISCONTINUE SERVICE

If you wish to have your gas service turned off, please let us know promptly. We need to read the meter in order to close your account and bill you properly. Please help us by providing easy access to your meter. Stop in at your local Consumers Gas Company business office to sign a request for disconnect and a final billing address.

DISCONNECTION OF SERVICE

Consumers Gas Company has the right to discontinue service to a customer for the following reasons. Non-payment of account, non-payment of deposit, failure to provide access to meter, unsafe operating conditions, usage without customer of record on file, theft of service or tampering, non-compliance with an order from the Commission, request of the Civil government and for maintenance of the natural gas system.

RECONNECTION OF SERVICE

If you are disconnected, your service will be restored when you pay in full or take care of the problem that caused disconnection. A \$30 reconnection fee may be charged.

ABOUT YOUR GAS METER

Consumers Gas Company reads your meter every month. In order to read your meter, we need to have access. **Please keep your shrubs trimmed and restrain your dog when our meter reader visits. If Consumers Gas Company representative do not have access to the meter, discontinuance of service may be an option. Please do not remodel your home or add a deck around your gas meter. Contact us before any construction is done so that your meter can be moved for easy access to Consumers Gas Company.**

METER TAMPERING IS ILLEGAL

Tampering with natural gas meters and piping endangers the lives and property of yourself and others. This act may lead to discontinuance of service, criminal prosecution, or both. Ultimately, this unlawful act affects everyone. If you know of someone tampering with gas lines or meters, please call Consumers Gas Company. All information will be kept confidential.

PAYING YOUR NATURAL GAS BILL

You may pay your gas bill by mail or in person at any Consumers Gas Company office using cash, check or money order or payment can be dropped off at First Bank in Carmi. When paying by mail or in person, be sure to include or have the tear-off payment portion of your bill with your check or money order. Payment may also be made through an ACH sign up which monthly automatically withdraws payment from your checking account. We also accept credit card payments by phone or in person at the Carmi office and online (third party processing fee applies) from a link on our website.

Monthly bills are due by the due date indicated on the bill. If you foresee difficulty in paying your gas bill, please call Consumers Gas Company to see if a payment option is available. It is important to call us to avoid service disconnection.

Consumers Gas Company reads your meter each month. If there's a need to estimate your bill it will be coded with EST. Meter readings and estimated bills are calculated by data from the prior year taking current climate changes into consideration. Please give us a call if you have a question about your bill.

An eligible residential customer who is head of household who can demonstrate that his or her primary source of income is derived from a benefit (Social Security, Supplementary Security Income; Veteran's Administration; any Pension Plan; Aid to Families with Dependent Children, etc.) that is received during the 10-day period after the customer's regular due date shall be entitled to a preferred payment date to enable the customer to submit timely payments. The preferred payment date shall not be more than 10 days after the customer's regular due date.

"BUDGET" YOUR MONTHLY GAS BILLS

Help even out your home energy bills by signing up for [Equal Payment Plan](#). It's the best way to budget for all your natural gas energy needs. You simply pay your yearly gas costs in 12 equal payments, subject to adjustments if the cost or usage changes significantly. This budget monthly amount is calculated using the last 12 months usage divided by 12. You will know what your payment will be every month. All Budget Plan accounts are reviewed at least once during the

4th and 7th month to prevent any major overages or shortages. If you wish to sign-up for the Equal Payment Plan please contact Consumers Gas Company Carmi office.

DEFERRED PAYMENT PLAN

A residential customer may be eligible for a payment plan known as a DPA in order to prevent disconnection unless they failed to complete a previous DPA in the last 12 months. The Deferred Payment Agreement will allow you to make a down payment on the amount you owe and make monthly payments to the utility over a period of time to pay off the past due balance. Please contact us at (618) 382-4158 to ask about payment options to avoid disconnection. You can reinstate a previous DPA that defaulted by catching up with all the payments that were due up to now. You may be charged with a reinstatement fee unless this is your first time reinstating the DPA.

FINANCIAL AID

Help with utility bills may be found in the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Along with the aid, LIHEAP qualifications give you extra rights. Contact LIHEAP at 618-384-5541. We may know of other aid available. To find out, contact us at Consumers Gas Company, 618-382-4158 or stop by our office at 216 Industrial Avenue, Carmi, IL 62821.

COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

If you have a complaint or problem, do not wait until after you are disconnected to contact us. Please call us at 618-382-4158 and we will work with you to resolve the issue. Your complaint will be responded to within 14 days. If we can't help you, you can direct your complaint to the Illinois Commerce Commission's Consumer Service Division at: 1-800-524-0795 (TTY 1-800-858-9277) or at <https://www.icc.illinois.gov/consumer/complaint>.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR NATURAL GAS BILL

Consumers Gas Company sends you a bill each month for your gas usage. Your bill includes:

- a. Facility charge - This is to pay for the fixed costs of providing you with natural gas. Included in the facility charge is the State Energy Assistance Charge which consists of 45 cents. Forty cents is for energy assistance and 5 cents is for energy research and development. Consumers Gas Company pays this charge to the State of Illinois monthly.
- b. Gas charge - This is calculated from your natural gas usage and the cost of gas for your service period. Your actual usage for the billing period is calculated from your previous and present meter reading. The date your meter was read is also included on your bill. Each month the cost of natural gas is calculated based upon the following factors: BTU Content – Prorated gas charge
This natural gas cost is then multiplied by your natural gas usage. Consumers Gas Company does not make a profit from the gas charge.
- c. Distribution charge - This is a charge per DTH for delivering natural gas to your meter through our distribution gas lines.
- d. State Tax – State taxes for natural gas are 2.4 cents per therm or 5 percent of the subtotal, whichever is lower.
- e. IL Additional Tax - A .01 percent Public Utility Tax charge. These taxes are collected and paid to the state and Illinois Commerce Commission.
- f. Municipal Tax – A tax charged by your local municipality or town/city.

LATE FEES

Late fees of 1.5% per month will be charged on accounts which are unpaid for more than two days after the due date on the bill.

ELECTRONIC BILL OPTION

Your bill is also available electronically. Please let us know if this is the method you would like to receive your bill.

PILOT LIGHTING

Consumers Gas Company will light pilots for a new service or when an interruption of service is caused by the company. No charge will be made at any time to check a possible gas leak.

RIGHT OF ENTRY

Consumers Gas Company shall have the authority to enter any building, structure or premises at any reasonable hour for the purpose of making inspections. In the case of emergency, Consumers Gas Company shall have the right of entry at any time, provided such entry is necessary in the interest of public safety.

ILLINOIS COMMERCE COMMISSION

The Illinois Commerce Commission rules apply to service and reliability. You can review the main set of rules that affect you at:

www.ilga.gov/commission/jcar/admincode/083/08300280sections.html

Illinois Commerce Commission (312) 814-2850

SECTION IV IMPORTANT NOTICES & POLICIES

CUSTOMER NOTIFICATION REGARDING CUSTOMER OWNED BURIED NATURAL GAS PIPING

This notice is being provided in accordance with Title 49 CFG 192.16 of the United States Department of Transportation (DOT).

In accordance with the "DOT Rule" listed above, Consumers Gas Company is hereby giving notice to all customers who have buried natural gas piping that is not maintained by Consumers Gas Company of the following information:

1. If the customer's buried piping is not maintained, it may be subject to the potential hazard of corrosion and leakage.
2. Buried gas piping should be:
 - a. periodically inspected for leaks;
 - b. periodically inspected for corrosion if the piping is metallic, and
 - c. repaired if any unsafe condition is discovered.
3. Before you dig call JULIE toll-free at 1-800-892-0123. JULIE operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. By Illinois state law you are required to call JULIE two working days prior to digging or excavating. At no cost to you, JULIE will notify the owners and/or operators of underground utilities who are JULIE members of this planned digging activity. The members utilities are then required to mark their facilities or notify you that they are clear. Excavation should be done by hand.
4. Plumbing and heating contractors can assist in locating, inspecting and repairing customer's buried piping.

For your guidance in determining whether this notice applies to you, please be informed that in most cases Consumers Gas Company maintains buried gas piping from the main (generally located near the street curb) up to the gas meter on the customer's premises. In addition, if the piping leaving the meter up to the principal gas utilization equipment is above ground when entering the customer's premises, this rule does not apply. If you are uncertain as to whether this notice applies to you, please contact Consumers Gas Company at 618-382-4158 or toll-free 1-800-322-4158.

NON-COVERAGE OF APPLIANCE SERVICE

Consumers Gas Company will not perform or be responsible for any service work done beyond the outlet of the meter excepting where the reason for the work is safety of persons or property. Any work beyond the outlet of the meter should be done by an appliance dealer, plumber or other party.

Work and responsibility is to stop at the outlet of the meter in conformity with interpretations of the Office of Pipeline Safety as to the applicability of the Minimum Federal Pipeline Safety Standards for gas facilities.

GAS SHUT-OFF

From time to time it may be necessary or desirable that natural gas service be temporarily interrupted for maintenance, construction, repair, emergencies or other purposes. During such periods the gas utility assumes no responsibility for resulting loss of heat, products, materials, plants, animals or other such things which might be affected by the fact that gas service is interrupted for a period of time.

EXCESS FLOW VALVE

The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration has issued a new regulation that requires Consumers Gas Company to offer an Excess Flow Valve (EFV) to its customers. An Excess Flow Valve (EFV) is an extra safety device that can be installed in a service line providing natural gas to the meter. The main purpose of an EFV is to reduce the risk of a release of natural gas caused by excavation damage to the service line between the point of connection to the main and the meter. An excess flow valve will not prevent or stop leaks that might occur downstream of the meter. Not every service can accommodate an EFV.

The installation of an EFV is not a requirement for existing natural gas service lines, however, at the request of a Consumers Gas Company customer one may be installed. The installation of an EFV would take one day and would require the excavation of the service line at the connection to the main line. If you would like an EFV installed in your service line, the cost you must pay is \$750.00. This includes all labor, equipment and materials but does not include restoration of grounds disturbed by excavation. It is not likely, but it is possible that future maintenance or replacement of the EFV might be necessary and could result in additional charges.

If you would like to have an EFV installed or have any questions, please call our main office at 618-382-4158 or 1-800-322-4150.

REFERENCE CODE

Consumers Gas Company has adopted the National Fuel Gas (NFPA 54). This safety Code covers the installation of fuel gas piping systems, fuel gas utilization equipment, and related accessories.

The code includes all piping systems from the point of delivery for natural gas, the outlet of the gas meter to the connections with each gas utilization device.

The latest edition of NFPA 54 is available for viewing at the offices of Consumers Gas Company. Following is a sampling of some of the more common rules. This is not a complete listing of NFPA 54. All piping and equipment shall be installed following the rules of the latest edition of NFPA 54.

**CONSUMERS GAS COMPANY
CREDIT & COLLECTION POLICY**

I. CREDIT:

(A) Credit shall be extended to any applicant that does not have a past due gas bill with Consumers Gas Company for the same class service being applied for.

(B) Credit could be extended to an applicant owing past due bill(s), for same class service, for which arrangements are made at the time of application – to satisfy past due accounts either by paying in full or arranging for a payment program if eligible for one.

(C) Credit could be extended to an applicant with a past history of 2 or more “written off” accounts with a guaranteed signature of a credit worthy party. Guaranteed signatory is one who will guarantee timely payment of an account. They would be held liable for payment of the account if the applicant fails to pay in a timely manner.

II. BILLING & PAYMENTS:

(A) Monthly bills will be mailed on the 10th of the month – payable on or before the 3rd of the following month. Mailed payments will be received as of the cancelled postage date by the USPS. Payments made or received after the due date will be charged a delinquent charge of 1 ½% of the unpaid balance.

(B) All bills not paid by the 4th of the month, following the billing date, are delinquent and subject to disconnection of service. Disconnect notices will be mailed on or before the 15th of the month. Customers will be advised of agencies and company programs available for assistance in paying past due bills. During the “heating season” (December 1 thru March 31) the customer will be contacted personally by a company representative or by US Mail – in addition to the delinquent notice – of notification for disconnect of service. This will be a “One Time Only” contact. If customer fails to respond to notices, service will be terminated with no further attempt to contact the customer.

(C) Customer may have service reconnected after payment terms are arranged. There will be a \$30 reconnect fee. The reconnect fee is waived one time per 12-month period per customer.

III. UN-PAID BILLS:

(A) When service is terminated due to non-payment of the account – or disconnected request by customer – final bills will be mailed to the last known address. If the bill becomes delinquent and Consumers Gas is unable to contact the customer for payment, the account will be placed with Medical & Professional Collection Services, Inc. for collection, thus jeopardizing the customers credit rating. If the account is placed with the collection agency, the customer must then make payment arrangements with the agency.

IV. RETURNED CHECKS:

(A) When an account is paid by check and said check is deemed uncollectible by the servicing bank, Consumers Gas Company will charge a \$15.00 service charge for cost of handling the returned check. The \$15.00 service charge must be paid at the time of check redemption. The check payment will be debited back to the customer’s account thus showing the account as unpaid. This may place the account in a delinquent status and cause the service to be disconnected.

(B) If there are two (2) returned checks within a twelve (12) month period, the account will be subject to “Cash” or Money Order payment. No further personal checks will be accepted as payment from the customer.

This policy is subject to all rules and regulations of the Illinois Commerce Commission 83 IL Admin Code Part 280. A copy of which is available for inspection at Consumers Gas Company’s office or by contacting the Illinois Commerce Commission at 527 East Capital Ave., Springfield, IL.