

WHAT'S THAT SMELL?

In its pure form natural gas is a colorless, odorless gas. A harmless odorizing agent called mercaptan is added to your natural gas that produces a distinctive pungent smell that reminds some of sulfur or rotten eggs. This added odorant enables natural gas to be detected in the event a gas leak occurs.

CERC routinely monitors odor concentration in the gas system for compliance with the regulatory requirements. Even so, you should not rely solely on your sense of smell to determine if a gas leak has occurred or is occurring.

DON'T RELY ON SENSE OF SMELL ALONE

In some situations, you may not be able to detect the odorant. Some people may have a diminished sense of smell. Physical conditions, including common colds, sinus conditions and allergies, can also temporarily impair your sense of smell. Sometimes the added odorant may be masked or overpowered by other odors. In rare incidences, odor fade (loss of odorant) may occur. This may cause the odor to diminish so that it is not detectable. You may be able to see other signs of a natural gas leak. Natural gas leaks often cause bubbling water, blowing dirt or dead plants. Natural gas leaks can also be detected by sound, as they often cause a hissing sound near a natural gas line or meter.

WHAT CAUSES ODOR FADE?

Odor fade (loss of odorant) can occur when physical and/or chemical processes, including adsorption, absorption and oxidation, cause the level of odorant in the gas to be reduced. If a natural gas leak occurs underground, the surrounding soil may cause odor fade. Other factors that may cause odor fade include, but are not limited to:

- The construction and configuration of your gas facilities
- The presence of rust, moisture, liquids or other substances in the pipe
- Gas composition, pressure and/or flow

Intermittent, little or no gas flow over an extended period of time may also result in an initial loss of odorant that returns once the gas flow increases or becomes more frequent.

