Call Before You Dig

If you are excavating where there may be buried pipes, power lines or other utility services, call the universal 811 number to have utility lines located and marked at least two working days before you begin. It’s free and it’s the law. Calling before you dig can save lives and prevent accidents.

**NATURAL GAS RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL SERVICE CONTRACT**

- Gas meters shall be located in ventilated spaces readily accessible for examination, reading, replacement or necessary maintenance. (For example, decks cannot be constructed over a gas meter.)
- Gas meters shall not be placed where they will be subject to damage, such as adjacent to a driveway or other locations subject to vehicular traffic, under a fire escape, in public passages, hallways or where they will be subject to excessive corrosion or vibration.
- Gas meters should not be located where they will be subjected to extreme temperatures or sudden extreme temperature changes (e.g., air ducts, dryer vents). Meters shall not be located in areas where they are subjected to temperatures beyond those recommended by the manufacturer.
- Minimum distances between gas meters to furnace intakes should be followed per the manufacturer’s specifications.
- NorthWestern Energy prefers a minimum of a 3-foot clear zone in front of the gas meter.
- Conditions may exist which will require other restrictions or distances (e.g., multiple meters or commercial/industrial).
- No structures or buildings can be located over underground natural gas lines.

*Any exceptions require the approval of NorthWestern Energy prior to the start of construction. If violations or deviations are determined, the customer will bear the cost of corrections.*

**Contacts...**

- **Montana**
  - All Areas (888) 467-2669
- **Nebraska/South Dakota**
  - All Areas (800) 245-6977

**New Natural Gas Service**

**Introduction...**

Converting to natural gas for heat or adding a new gas fireplace may be more affordable than you think, especially if you already have a natural gas riser nearby. Just review this general overview of the requirements for a new gas service and installation of gas appliances. Each construction project differs, so call to discuss your project.

**We’ll be happy to help.**

**Getting Started**

1. Call NorthWestern Energy at the number for your area to check natural gas service availability at your location.
2. Be ready to provide the following information:
   - Permanent address or legal description
   - Mailing address
   - Size of the structure to be served by natural gas
   - Capacity of equipment (in BTUs) to be served by natural gas
3. Obtain a building or mechanical permit from the city or county building department.
   When you complete these steps, call to schedule a NorthWestern Energy representative to meet with you at the site.
   We schedule two to eight weeks in advance, depending on how busy the construction season is, so call early.

**Prepare for Service Installation**

Your lot must be at final grade and the foundation backfilled and compacted at the meter location. Be sure required gas line easements are signed before construction. In Montana, South Dakota and Nebraska, construction costs must be paid to NorthWestern before we install service.

The “Meter Set Location” diagram below illustrates meter location and clearances. Be sure the meter and associated equipment are protected from falling ice, snow, water, etc.

Pipe stubbed from a mobile home must be at least 3/4-inch in diameter. You must provide a kink-proof approved flexible connector from the mobile home piping to the meter. Contact NorthWestern Energy for specific type and length requirements for your location.

**At the Site**

Meet with our representative to determine your gas meter’s appropriate and permanent location. NorthWestern Energy reserves the right to specify the meter location. Know the following information in advance to avoid service delays or having to do an expensive relocation someday:

- Septic system location
- Electric routes
- Phone routes
- Deck conflicts
- Roof drainage
- Future building plans
- Cooking exhaust location
- Future landscaping conflicts
- Foundation vent locations
- Gas equipment, exhaust location
- Bathroom exhaust location
- Location of windows
- Cable TV or satellite routes

**NOTE:** Electric Meter Clearance Zone: The edge of gas piping or the gas meter must be at least 15” from the vertical center-line of the electric meter. No gas piping can pass under the meter.

**NOTES:** No ignition sources, electrical equipment, building openings, or vents should be allowed in Zone A. Note: Manufactured, non-operable windows are not considered building openings.

High Efficiency Furnace Intake (Distance recommended by the manufacturer.)

Non-Induced Natural Draft Intake. (Recommend 6 feet).

Power Ventilation or Mechanically Induced Combustion Air Intake (recommend distance 10 feet).
Natural Gas Appliances

State and national codes permit different configurations for installing gas appliances. Here are general guidelines. Obtain complete installation information from your appliance’s documentation or the appropriate Fuel Gas Code for your location. Call your heating or plumbing contractor, or the city or county building department.

Venting and Combustion Air

- Category 1 gas appliances shall be vented with double wall type B vent for the common vent. Type C vent may be used for connectors in some locations, unless in an attic or crawl space.
- Venting must maintain proper clearance from all combustibles. Type B vent requires a 1-inch clearance. Type C vent requires a 6-inch clearance.
- Appliances may be vented into masonry chimneys that meet code requirements.
- Solid fuel appliances shall not be vented in the same chimney flue as natural gas appliances. Liquid burning appliances and natural gas appliances shall be permitted to be connected to one chimney flue as approved in the National Fuel Gas Code (NFPA 54).

Piping

- Natural gas piping must be black iron or approved corrugated stainless steel tubing. For public safety, all pipe must be properly installed and supported.
- Pipe size should accommodate the total gas load. NorthWestern Energy requires exterior piping to be at least 3.5 inches above grade.
- Each appliance must have its own drip leg, American Gas Association-approved shut-off valve, and union. The union must be placed between the shut-off valve and appliance. The shut-off valve must be readily accessible and should be as near to the appliance as possible (within six feet).

Other Appliance Considerations

- Verify that installed appliances meet applicable codes regarding firewalls, fire stops and ductwork. Other codes include:
  - Central heating equipment and water heaters cannot be installed in a bedroom, bathroom or any room accessed from a bedroom or bathroom.
  - The bottom of a gas appliance in a garage must be at least 18 inches above the garage floor.
  - The control side of an appliance must have at least 30 inches of clear space.
  - Central heating equipment requires a dedicated electrical circuit with a fused switch located on or adjacent to the appliance.
  - Appropriate clearances from combustibles must be maintained as defined by the manufacturer’s instructions or applicable codes.

CSST Grounding Requirements

Direct bonding of CSST is required for all newly installed gas piping systems incorporating CSST whether or not the equipment is electrically powered. This requirement is 2012 National Fuel Gas Code.

2009 National Fuel Gas Code-7.13.2 CSST Bonding

CSST piping systems shall be bonded to the electrical service grounding electrode system. The bonding jumper shall connect to a metallic pipe or fitting between the point of delivery and the first downstream CSST fitting. For public safety, the bonding jumper shall not be smaller than 6 AWG copper wire or equivalent. Gas piping systems that contain one or more segments of CSST shall be bonded in accordance with this section.

Northwestern Energy requires when CSST is used for customer’s piping, the termination at the meter connection shall be minimum 1” black iron pipe (schedule 40) to the 1st support (green arrow illustration 1). The black iron pipe will be adequately attached to that support. A manufactured CSST termination fitting is acceptable for the connection between CSST and 1” black iron pipe on the exterior of the home. All piping connecting the meter to the termination fitting must be 1” black iron pipe that is properly supported.

Inspection, Testing and Maintenance

You may need a permit for appliance and piping inspections before NorthWestern Energy can set a meter and turn on gas service. Commercial customers require a state or local permit and inspection. Contact us for information about permits and inspections required in your area.

Customers must pressure test all new natural gas piping systems at 10 to 15 p.s.i. for at least 15 minutes before use. Disconnect all appliances and cap shut-off valves before testing to avoid damaging appliance regulators. In Montana, NorthWestern Energy requires our representative to witness the test.

When a meter bar is provided with the natural gas riser, your contractor must connect the gas piping directly to the meter bar. The system can then be pressure tested through the 1/4-inch tap on the meter bar. The meter bar must be level after piping is connected.

At the time we witness the pressure test and code compliance in Montana, our service representative will set the gas meter and test fire your equipment. In South Dakota and Nebraska, contact NorthWestern Energy when you are ready for us to set the meter.

You are responsible for inspecting and maintaining piping downstream of the meter, including buried lines that may be subject to corrosion and leaks. You may contact NorthWestern Energy for advice or assistance, and cap shut-off valves before testing to avoid damaging appliance regulators. In Montana, NorthWestern Energy requires our representative to witness the test.