

USING NATURAL GAS AT HOME

Energy-Saving Tips and Safety Information



Using Natural Gas at Home

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INTRODUCTION

Dear Xcel Energy Customer:

We're glad to have you as one of our customers, and we want you to know that providing you with information that can help you save energy and money is one of our primary goals.

Natural gas is a clean burning energy source that minimizes the need for expensive furnace/boiler cleanings and tune-ups. As a result of these and other benefits more than 69 million American residential, commercial and industrial customers use natural gas.

Included are:

- Tips that can help you save energy at home
- Information on natural gas appliances

Keeping you and your family safe is also important to us. We have included a number of tips to refresh your memory on how to stay safe around the natural gas we supply to your home.

You can learn more by calling us at 1-800-895-4999, or by visiting us online at xcelenergy.com

Best regards,
The Employees of Xcel Energy





Natural gas is a good energy value for your home. Heating with natural gas costs less than heating with electricity, propane and heating oil*. Saving money is top-of-mind for many of us, so here are some steps you can take to use energy more wisely and manage the costs of your monthly energy bill.

HOW TO SAVE ENERGY AND MONEY

Heating

Keep the cold out

Reducing air leaks and ensuring proper insulation can cut as much as 10 percent from an average household's monthly energy bill. Seal leaky ducts with mastic, metal-backed tape or aerosol sealant to reduce heat loss when your furnace is running. Improving the insulation of walls, crawl spaces, floors, and heating ducts can be one of the fastest and most cost-effective ways to reduce your energy costs.

*According to the U.S. Department of Energy.

SAFETY TIPS

Natural gas is odorless.

We add an odorant to our gas, mercaptan, that smells like rotten eggs. It smells bad – and that's good. If you detect the smell of rotten eggs in your home, you should report this odor right away by calling us at 1-800-895-2999. In an emergency call 911. **Do not try to locate the source of the smell by yourself.**

Maintain furnace filters and vents

Dirty filters reduce airflow, making your furnace work harder and use more energy. Change furnace filters once a month during the heating season to reduce heating costs by 5 percent.

Use a programmable thermostat

You can cut annual heating and cooling bills by as much as 10 percent per year by automatically turning your heating system up or down to coincide with your daily routine. Set your thermostat between 65 and 70 degrees during the winter, and at 58 degrees when away from the house for more than a few hours.

Open and close windows and adjust shades to regulate housing temperatures

On sunny days, open draperies and blinds to let the sun's warmth in, and close them at night to insulate against cold air outside.

Install storm windows

Storm windows installed over single-pane windows can cut heat loss through the window by as much as 50 percent. Storm windows added over double-pane windows can cut heat loss an additional 25 percent. During the heating season, storm windows help to reduce drafts, water condensation and frost formation. Covering windows with a plastic cover is a less costly alternative to installing storm windows.

Reverse the direction of your ceiling fan in the winter

Run your ceiling fan at low speed in the reverse direction (counter-clockwise) during the heating season so that the blades push air up toward the ceiling where hot air often gets trapped. The fan will drive the warm air back down around the edges of the room, resulting in more even heating and improved comfort.





Keep your fireplace damper closed

By closing the damper when the fireplace is not in use, you can prevent up to 5 percent of heat loss. When using the fireplace, turn down your thermostat and open a window near the fireplace to prevent warm air from being pulled from other areas of your house.

Install glass doors on fireplaces

Glass doors act as a barrier against warm air being drawn up and out of the chimney and cold air moving into a room. They also allow the heat from the fire to radiate into the room.

Install a fireplace insert

Fireplace inserts fit into an existing fireplace, and are useful if you use your fireplace regularly. They improve fireplace efficiency by blowing heat from the fire into the room and limiting the amount of heat and conditioned air lost up the chimney.

Water

Set water heater temperature at 120 degrees

By lowering the temperature, families can save \$18 annually without sacrificing comfort.

Don't waste hot water

Turning off the hot-water faucet while shaving or brushing your teeth, for example, will help to conserve both water and the energy necessary to heat the water.

Insulate water heaters and hot water pipes

Insulation “blankets” installed in accordance with the manufacturer’s guidelines can prevent a significant amount of heat loss.

Install water-flow restrictors in showerheads and faucets

Low-flow showerheads and faucets can reduce water consumption by as much as 10 percent. You also save on the energy used to heat the water without noticing any difference in water pressure.

Run washing machines, dishwashers, and clothes dryers with full loads

Get in the habit of running full loads to maximize energy use.

Kitchen

Check the flame on your range

If you cook with gas, ensure the flame is blue. A blue flame indicates it is operating most efficiently. If it is yellow, a qualified dealer or repair person may be needed to make the necessary adjustments.

Use glass dishes for baking

Glass retains heat better than other materials, so it helps food cook faster and uses less energy.

Use the microwave

A microwave uses only 20 percent of the energy required by a full-sized oven. If you must use an oven, defrost items in the refrigerator or microwave first to cut down on oven cooking time.





When you choose natural gas appliances for your home, you are choosing comfort, convenience and cost savings. Natural gas is ideally suited for home heating, cooking and other essential household needs.

NATURAL GAS APPLIANCES

Natural gas heating systems

According to the American Gas Association, more than 60 million American households prefer a natural gas heating system because it delivers warmth and comfort and it is economical to operate. Today, 70 percent of all new homes are built using natural gas heat.

With efficiencies up to 96.6 percent, natural gas furnaces are one of the most efficient heating options available. They are also easy to operate and maintain, as they come equipped with an electronic ignition system that lights the pilot only when heat is needed. Some furnace models have an automatic vent damper that closes the vent pipe when it is not in use, keeping warm air from escaping through the chimney.

Natural gas water heaters

A high-efficiency natural gas water heater will heat water faster than an electric unit at about half the cost.

Natural gas water heaters range from 20 to 100 gallon capacities to fit your household needs. The quick recovery time of a natural gas water heater means you may be able to meet your hot water needs with a smaller capacity unit than an electric water heater.

Natural gas cooking equipment

With even heat and precise temperature controls, you will get professional results with your natural gas range and cook-top. It costs about a third as much to cook with a natural gas range compared with a similar electric range. Although a natural gas range may cost a little more to buy upfront than an electric model, it will pay for itself with energy cost savings and years of reliable, precise cooking and convenience.

Many of the new models of natural gas cooking equipment use an electronic spark ignition system, rather than a continuously burning pilot. This saves as much as 30 percent on energy costs. And, when the flame goes out, the gas turns off, so a natural gas range is safe.

Stove top burners let you choose any temperature setting you want—high, simmer, warm, or anywhere in between, and the flame can be adjusted to fit many sizes of pots and pans. Plus, many new natural gas ranges and cook-tops have sealed burners allowing for quick and easy cleaning.





Natural gas clothes dryers

With a natural gas dryer, your clothes will dry more quickly than with an electric dryer because a greater volume of dry, absorbent air passes through the clothes. And, you will save up to 50 percent on your operating costs. Natural gas dryers are so cost-efficient; you will be able to dry two loads of laundry for the price of one.

Natural gas dryers come with a lifetime burner, push-to-start safety ignition and automatic shut-off. With multiple temperature settings, natural gas clothes dryers are ideal for busy families.

Natural gas fireplaces

With natural-looking gas logs and a controllable gas burner, you can create a fire so life-like, it will look just like a wood-burning fire. And, with electronic ignition and temperature controls, you can enjoy your gas fireplace and the heat it produces any time you wish.

With natural gas fireplace logs, there are no sparks, hot ashes or chimney build-up that can cause fires. Fireplaces also come equipped with safety shut-off valves.

Factory-built fireplaces are installed during construction. They often have built-in heat exchangers to provide maximum, heating efficiency, while still providing the smoke-free ambiance of a gas fireplace. Gas fireplace inserts are designed for installation into an existing fireplace, letting you enjoy increased energy efficiency and the environmental benefits of natural gas.

Natural gas barbecue grills

When your barbecue grill is connected to your home gas system, you will no longer need to worry about running out of fuel in the middle of your cookout. Your natural gas grill will heat up very quickly—up to 600 degrees in six minutes. And, with control settings, you can cook your foods at the exact temperature required.

Natural gas is safe because it is lighter than air and will rise into the atmosphere in the event of a leak. It is easy to operate as well. With automatic ignition controls, all you need to do is turn the dial, start your grill and begin cooking—all within minutes.

You will save money when you cook with a natural gas barbecue grill. For example, it costs only 7 cents to cook six hamburgers with natural gas compared to 55 cents with a charcoal grill.

SAFETY TIPS

Outdoors

Because natural gas is lighter than air, it seeks the path of least resistance and can migrate underground for miles through loose dirt, along pipes, sewer and water lines, or cracks. If natural gas accumulates in an area, all it takes is a tiny spark to cause an explosion. Outdoor gas odor should be reported right away by calling us at 1-800-895-2999. **Do not try to locate the source yourself.**



A QUICK START TO ONLINE RESOURCES



Go to [xcelenergy.com/infosmart](https://www.xcelenergy.com/infosmart) to find:

Home Energy Analyzer – Your source for personalized recommendations on how to save energy and money

Energy Calculators – Tools to find out how much energy your appliances use and to help you choose energy-efficient appliances

ENERGYsmart University – A virtual college campus that focuses on energy-related issues

ENERGYsmart Library – A place to look up energy-related items

Take advantage of our online information to learn more about energy and how you can save on a daily basis. Visit [xcelenergy.com](https://www.xcelenergy.com) today to get started.

OTHER INFORMATION SOURCES

American Gas Association: www.aga.org

The Environmental Protection Agency: www.epa.gov

The U.S. Department of Energy: www.doe.gov

The Environmental Protection Agency: www.epa.gov

The ENERGY STAR® program: www.energystar.gov

The U.S. Department of Energy: www.doe.gov



XCEL ENERGY CONTACT INFORMATION

24-Hour Emergency

Electric Emergency/Power Outage **1-800-895-1999**

Gas Emergency/Gas Odor **1-800-895-2999**

Residential/Home Office

24-Hour Customer Service and Billing **1-800-895-4999**

TDD/TTY Support **1-800-895-4949**

Product Sales and Information **1-800-824-1688**

Para esta información en español **1-800-895-4999**

Business

Customer Service and Billing **1-800-481-4700**

Internet & E-mail Inquiries

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Business **bsc@xcelenergy.com**

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