



February 15, 2017

**RE: Public Awareness**

To Whom It May Concern,

This letter has been provided by Maine Natural Gas (MNG) as part of MNG's public awareness plan per DOT CRF Section 192.616 – Public Awareness. This letter serves as an informational distribution.

**Why Utility Lines Can Cross Through Sewer Lines**

When a new utility line - such as a line for gas, electric, telephone, or cable television - needs to be installed in an urban area, it's very common for utility providers to dig horizontally underground, also called directional boring. Since this installation method does not involve digging a trench, it avoids damage to sidewalks, patios, and landscaping, as well as existing utility lines marked by the local one call system, Dig Safe®. MNG often uses this trenchless method.

However, the sewer pipes that connect private homes and businesses to the sewer main, called "laterals," are not typically marked by the Dig Safe® system, so it's possible for laterals to go undetected during directional boring. The unintentional result is that the borehole for a utility line can cross directly through a sewer lateral, creating what is known as a "crossbore."

**What MNG Does to Prevent Crossboring**

MNG's installation contractors take steps to ensure a crossbore doesn't happen. When a service or main line is installed, MNG contractor's pothole for sewer laterals and sewer lines to avoid damage to utilities. In some cases, sewer laterals are not able to be located by exposing them so contractors will use a camera to locate sewer mains and laterals. This method is also used after installation to inspect sewer lines and make sure crossboring didn't occur. Customers who are at risk for crossbore are provided a door hanger informing them of the possible risks and to contact MNG if they believe their sewer line has been compromised.

## **Safety Recommendations for Plumbers, Drain Cleaners, and Sewer Cleaners**

In rare cases, our small-diameter gas pipeline may cross through a sewer pipe without our knowledge. If a plumber unknowingly strikes a gas line while cutting through a sewer blockage, natural gas could enter the sewer system. We want to prevent this from happening.

### **Before you begin**

- LOOK for trees or landscaping that could possibly be causing an obstruction.
- ASK the resident if there has been any recent utility work in the area.
- USE an in-line video inspection device if you have access to one, as it will help you to better assess the blockage.
- BE SAFE: Assume that all obstructions involve a crossbore.

### **During the cleaning**

- DO NOT use a cutting tool. This applies when clearing both sewer laterals and drains.
- USE MINIMALLY INVASIVE equipment, such as a plumbing snake or water jet, to attempt to clear the blockage.
- FEEL for obstructions that do not seem to resemble tree roots or other common obstructions as the tool moves through the sewer line.

### **After you finish**

We do not recommend that you use a cutting tool. However, if you have already used one, please do the following:

- CALL MNG's Gas Emergency Number **(1-877-532-5636)** if you suspect a line has been compromised before doing anything else.
- CHECK the blades for yellow or black plastic when it is withdrawn from the sewer line. Natural gas utility lines are typically made of this color plastic.
- WATCH for bubbles caused by natural gas escaping from the toilet or other entry point of the cutting equipment.
- INSPECT the area with a Combustible Gas Indicator (CGI) or other gas-detection equipment, if available.
- PROVIDE the number for MNG's Gas Emergency Number to the customer. The loss of gas service may not be immediately apparent.

## **Leak Recognition and Response**

If a line is hit, you may recognize it by the smell, sight, or sound.

- SIGHT – You may see a white cloud, mist, fog, bubbles in standing water, or vegetation that appears to be dead or dying for no apparent reason.
- SOUND – You may hear an unusual noise like roaring, hissing or whistling.
- SMELL – Natural gas is colorless and odorless. Before it reaches you, we add a distinctive, pungent odor so that you'll recognize it quickly.

What should you do if you suspect a leak?

- MOVE to a safe environment
- CALL the Maine Natural Gas Emergency Number: **1-877-532-5636**
- DO NOT strike a match, use telephones, switch on/off appliances, lights, or even a flashlight in the area where you smell gas. These items can produce sparks that might ignite the gas and cause an explosion.

**For Contractors**

- Stop work and evacuate the site to a safe distance
- Call 911 if there is blowing gas
- Call the Maine Natural Gas Emergency Number: **1-877-532-5636**
- Don't do anything to cause a spark
- Alert everyone on the premises
- Keep the public and traffic away
- Do not try to fix the pipe or slow the rate of leaking gas

Do not try to extinguish a gas burning fire unless there is a threat to life

Please feel free to contact us with any questions at 207-729-0420 ext. 100 or via email at [smason@mainenaturalgas.com](mailto:smason@mainenaturalgas.com).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sheena Mason', written in a cursive style.

Sheena B. Mason, P.E.  
Gas Engineer