

SEPTEMBER



FOCUS: ADJUSTABLE WRENCH



This action sheet is produced as part of the Southern California Earthquake Survival Program (ESP). ESP is an effort to increase the level of individual and family preparedness in this region. It is coordinated by eight southern California counties and the Southern California Earthquake Preparedness Project.

WHY

An adjustable wrench can be used to turn off the gas if you suspect a leak. Ground shaking during an earthquake may cause broken gas mains and service connections; broken appliance connections inside homes and other buildings also pose an increased fire hazard. You can significantly reduce fire hazards if you take the following precautions now:

1. Have an adjustable wrench or another appropriate tool available at all times;
2. Know where the gas shut-off valve is located (usually, it is at or near the meter);
3. Know how and when to turn off the gas.

WHEN

It is important to know when to turn off the gas. **Only a qualified plumber or service representative from a gas company should turn on gas once it has been shut off at the meter.** The gas company does not recommend that you automatically turn off the gas after an earthquake. You should shut it off if you hear or smell leaking gas.

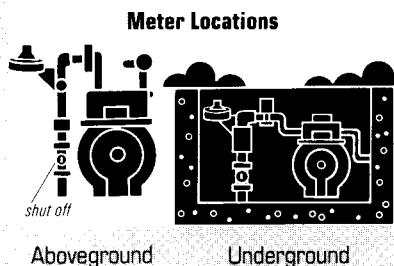
Records from the Southern California Gas Company show that 27,000 residents turned off their gas after the 1987 Whittier earthquake, yet only 6,000 had leaks and only one-third of them were earthquake related. That means at least 21,000 households needlessly went without hot water and the use of ranges and heaters. Southern California Gas was able to restore service to everyone within seven days, but it required 250 people working 24 hours a day in 12-hour shifts.

Printed Courtesy of

KNX 10.70™ NEWSRADIO

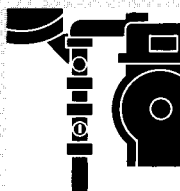
Be Prepared

Your meter could be located in one of several locations: underground at the curb/middle of yard/in the porch/side of house/ either under house or in crawl space/ in cellar or basement/vicinity of garage/multiple meter set.



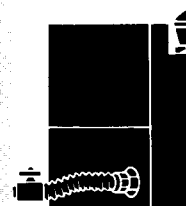
Most common gas meters look like one of these.

Locate the shut off valve. Be sure you can reach it.



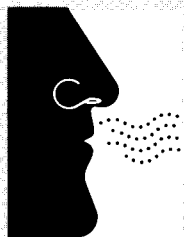
Keep an adjustable wrench available for turning off the valve. Minimum length should be 12"

Shaking can cause leaks at semi-rigid tubing that carries gas to your appliances. Replace these with approved corrugated metal appliance connectors.



After An Earthquake

Do NOT turn off your gas unless you smell it or hear it leaking.



Until you are sure there is no leak, do not turn electrical switches on or off and do not use matches or candles.

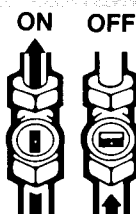


If a leak occurs at a specific appliance, you may be able to turn off gas to only that appliance.

If a leak cannot be stopped by turning off an appliance valve, turn off gas at the main valve at the meter. Call the Gas Company or a qualified plumber to turn the gas back on.



After the earthquake, check to make sure none of the appliance vents have been separated during the shaking.



Source: *Earthquake, Safety Tips on Natural Gas Safety Before and After*, Southern California Gas Company.

Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) restored service to more than 156,000 customers after the October, 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. Again, customers who unnecessarily turned off their gas caused the majority of outages. With help from other utility companies, PG&E was able to restore service within a reasonable amount of time. During one period, PG&E had 1,183 service personnel relighting

gas service. In both situations—Whittier and Loma Prieta—personnel who could have been used in other areas of the disaster were addressing problems that could have been avoided.

Get it done in '91



Published by:

Southern California Earthquake Preparedness Project/Governor's Office of Emergency Services

EXPERIENCE SAYS, AFTER AN EARTHQUAKE...

- DO NOT automatically turn off the gas — check first.
- Keep the wrench in a plastic bag to minimize rust.
- Wrenches should be at least 12 inches long.
- Have alternative cooking equipment handy (See July ESP Focus).