

## **Utility Shut-off and Safety**

- Natural Gas
- Water
- Electricity

In the event of a disaster, you may be instructed to shut off the utility service at your home. Below is some general guidance for shutting off utility service. You should modify the information provided to reflect your shut off requirements as directed by your utility company.

### **Natural Gas**

Natural gas leaks and explosions are responsible for a significant number of fires following disasters.

It is vital that all household members know how to shut off natural gas.

Because there are different gas shut-off procedures for different gas meter configurations, it is important to contact your local gas company for guidance on preparation and response regarding gas appliances and gas service to your home.

When you learn the proper shut-off procedure for your meter, share the information with everyone in your household. Be sure not to actually turn off the gas when practicing the proper gas shut-off procedure.

- If you smell gas or hear a blowing or hissing noise, open a window and get everyone out quickly.
- Turn off the gas, using the outside main valve if you can, and call the gas company from a neighbor's home.
- CAUTION - If you turn off the gas for any reason, a qualified professional must turn it back on.
- NEVER attempt to turn the gas back on yourself.

### **Water**

Water quickly becomes a precious resource following many disasters. It is vital that all household members learn how to shut off the water at the main house valve.

Cracked lines may pollute the water supply to your house. It is wise to shut off your water until you hear from authorities that it is safe for drinking.

The effects of gravity may drain the water in your hot water heater and toilet tanks unless you trap it in your house by shutting off the main house valve (not the street valve in the cement box at the curb—this valve is extremely difficult to turn and requires a special tool).

#### **Preparing to Shut Off Water**

- Locate the shut-off valve for the water line that enters your house.
- Make sure this valve can be completely shut off. Your valve may be rusted open, or it may only partially close. Replace it if necessary.
- Label this valve with a tag for easy identification, and make sure all household members know where it is located.

## **Electricity**

Electrical sparks have the potential of igniting natural gas if it is leaking. It is wise to teach all responsible household members where and how to shut off the electricity.

### **Preparing to Shut Off Electricity**

- Locate your electricity circuit box.
- Teach all responsible household members how to shut off the electricity to the entire house.

**FOR YOUR SAFETY:** Always shut off all the individual circuits before shutting off the main circuit breaker.

*Courtesy: <http://www.fema.gov/plan/prepare/utilityplan.shtm>*