



Keep Your Natural Gas Meter Working Safely

MINNEAPOLIS, Feb 09, 2006 /PRNewswire-FirstCall via COMTEX News Network/ -- CenterPoint Energy (NYSE: CNP) encourages its Minnesota customers to keep their natural gas meters clear of snow and ice to help ensure safe operation. Accumulating snow or ice caused by freezing and thawing conditions can create safety problems when it blocks the meter's regulator vent. The result could be a service disruption or in rare instances a potentially dangerous pressure build-up of natural gas.

The following tips will help ensure safe meter operation:

- * Keep the meter area and its pathway clear of snow, leaves and other debris. Carefully remove snow from the meter by hand. This also applies to the exterior vent pipe of a meter located indoors.
- * Do not use a snow blower near the meter.
- * Do not attempt to remove ice from the meter.
- * Contact CenterPoint Energy at (612) 321-5200 or 1-800-722-9326 if you observe any of the following conditions:
 - Snow or ice formation is visible above the meter
 - The meter is located below a downspout
 - Overhang or eave does not fully extend over the meter
 - The meter is located below a roof valley without a gutter
 - The meter is located below an exterior water spigot

The location of a natural gas meter is also important for proper operation, maintenance and safety. Whether on the inside or outside of a structure, a natural gas meter must be located in a safe and accessible place. Do not enclose indoor meters in an unventilated surrounding or walled-off behind sheet rock, paneling, etc. For outdoor meters, do not install fences, landscaping or other obstructions that might impede access.

As always, take the following precautions if you smell natural gas:

- * Leave immediately. Do not use electric switches, a phone, or anything that could cause a spark. Do not return until given permission by the utility or public safety officials.
- * Go to a safe location and call the CenterPoint Energy - Emergency Service/Gas Leak Hotline: (612) 372-5050 or 1-800-722-9326; and call 911.
- * Do not assume someone else reported the leak.
- * Leave all repairs to properly equipped and trained utility technicians. Never try to repair a natural gas leak.

Visit <http://www.CenterPointEnergy.com> for more safety information.

Headquartered in Houston, TX, CenterPoint Energy is a domestic energy delivery company that includes electric transmission and distribution, natural gas distribution and sales, and interstate pipeline and gathering operations. The company serves nearly five million metered customers in six states and has assets of about \$16 billion. With more than 9,000 employees, CenterPoint Energy and its predecessor companies have been in business for over 135 years. In Minnesota, CenterPoint Energy is the state's largest natural gas distribution company, serving more than 760,000 residential, commercial and industrial customers in over 240 communities. Home Service Plus(R), the company's non-regulated business in Minnesota, offers products and services in the categories of heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) and appliance repair, and HVAC and hearth equipment sales. Visit the Web site at <http://www.CenterPointEnergy.com> .

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