

## ARE YOU PREPARED? THE IMPORTANCE OF SHUTTING OFF UTILITIES DURING A DISASTER

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After a disaster where utilities have been disrupted, there may be a need to turn off certain utilities in order to control additional damage from the disaster. This usually involves turning off one or more of the following: natural gas, water and electricity.

Emergency service providers and utility employees will be overwhelmed following the disaster, so it's important that your family and your neighbors know how and where to control the utilities. Pre-planning and fast actions can save both lives and property.

### SHUTTING OFF NATURAL GAS

- ▶ Natural gas leaks and explosions are responsible for a significant number of fires during and after disasters. It is vital that all household members know how to shut off natural gas. Gas meters can usually be found on the side of the house.
- ▶ Because there are different gas shut-off procedures for different gas meter configurations, it is important to contact your local gas company for any guidance on preparations 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 procedures.
- ▶ 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.

### SHUTTING OFF WATER

- ▶ Water quickly becomes a precious resource in a disaster situation. It is crucial that all household members learn how to shut off the water at the main house valve.
- ▶ Before an emergency happens, locate the shut-off valve for the water line that enters your house and label this valve for easy identification. Make sure all household members know where it is located. You should also make sure the valve can be completely shut off. It may be rusted open or it may only partially close. If so, replace it.
- ▶ Cracked lines may pollute the water supply to your house. It is wise to shut off your water until you

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hear from authorities that it is safe for drinking.

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

#### SHUTTING OFF ELECTRICITY

- ▶ Electrical sparks could ignite natural gas if it is leaking, and they could also cause other flammable materials to catch fire. It is wise to teach all household members how to shut off the electricity.
- ▶ Locate your electrical circuit box. For your safety, always shut off all the individual circuits before shutting off the main circuit. If your house has fuses instead of circuit breakers, keep extra fuses on hand in case one blows during an emergency. Never replace a fuse with one of higher amperage.
- ▶ Finally, make sure your circuit breaker or fuse box is properly labeled so you know exactly what switches cut power to which areas of the house.

In addition to insuring your home, Hardenbergh Insurance Group is committed to helping you and your loved ones stay safe when disaster strikes. If you would like more information on developing a family emergency plan or building a disaster supply kit, please contact us at (856) 489-9100 or <http://www.hig.net> today.

#### For more information, contact:



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