Unauthorized Use of Gas Is Unsafe – and Illegal!

People who install unauthorized connections to divert natural gas around meters and into their home or business are not only breaking the law – they’re also endangering property and lives. Tampering with a gas meter or natural gas line could cause property damage and fatal injury from asphyxiation, explosion, or fire.

Theft of energy affects all customers through higher costs. Each year, meters that have been bypassed or tampered with result in the loss of billions of dollars worth of stolen energy. That can mean higher prices for trusted customers as utilities try to recover lost revenue for energy that was used but never reported.

If you suspect someone might have tampered with a meter, please call our Energy Theft Hotline at 1-866-515-9864. We’ll keep your name and all information confidential. Your call can help protect property and lives. Offenders will be prosecuted to the limit of the law, including fines and possible imprisonment.

It’s Not too Late to Sign Up for the Budget Payment Plan

Changing weather conditions can make your winter heating bills unpredictable. The Budget Payment Plan helps to reduce the impact of weather and gas prices on your household budget by spreading your total annual heating cost more evenly over the year.

Although the budget year began in August, you can still enjoy lower bills this winter by joining the Budget Payment Plan now. Log in to your account at columbia gas.com for more information or to enroll, or call Columbia Gas DirectLink at 1-888-460-4332 and select option 1 from the automated menu. After you identify your account, select option 3 and follow the appropriate prompts. Your budget payment amount might be higher than it was in August since there are fewer months remaining in the budget year, but you’ll know what to expect to pay each month so that Old Man Winter won’t play havoc with your household budget.
Proper Venting Can Prevent Carbon Monoxide

When you seal your home against cold temperatures, be careful to avoid creating conditions that can produce carbon monoxide (CO). Even though natural gas doesn’t contain carbon monoxide, the colorless and odorless gas can be produced when there’s not enough oxygen present for natural gas, oil, or any other fuel to burn properly.

Carbon monoxide gives no warning, but continued exposure can be extremely dangerous. A vehicle left idling in an enclosed garage can produce enough carbon monoxide to cause illness. In fact, more than two-thirds of accidental deaths from carbon monoxide are caused by poorly vented vehicle exhaust, and by coal, kerosene, or wood burned in a fireplace or stove that’s not vented properly.

To guard against carbon monoxide, have your furnace and water heating system serviced regularly by a qualified heating contractor. Proper adjustment and venting of equipment will help to ensure an adequate supply of fresh air for combustion. Also, carbon monoxide detectors are easy to install and can alert you when the concentration of carbon monoxide in the air is above acceptable levels.

Claim Your Earned Income Tax Credit

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a special income tax benefit for people who work full- or part-time. If you qualify, you’ll owe less in federal taxes and could get a partial refund. Even if you don’t owe income tax, you might be eligible for the EITC, but you must file a federal tax return.

Some taxpayers might be eligible to claim the EITC for the first time, especially if there were changes in the family such as a new child, divorce or a decrease in earnings during the past year.

For more information about the EITC and help with filing your return, visit the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Web site at www.irs.gov/individuals or call the IRS toll-free at 1-800-829-1040 for the location of a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) center near you.