What’s That Smell?

Smell gas. Act fast. These are the words you need to remember when experiencing a natural gas leak. But how do you know if there might be a leak?

There are three signs that there might be a gas leak:

Smell—Natural gas smells like rotten eggs! Natural gas doesn’t actually have an odor. The rotten egg scent comes from a chemical that’s added to natural gas to help people detect it.

See—A white cloud, mist, or fog might appear.

Hear—A gas leak can create a hissing, whistling, or roaring sound.

Kids should tell a trusted grown-up right away if they think they smell, see, or hear gas inside or outside. Then the grown-up should get everyone out of the house or area, and away from the possible leak. When everyone is safe, the grown-up should call 911 or their gas company (Con Edison or National Grid). Report it, don’t ignore it.

There are also things you should not do if you smell gas or suspect a leak. You should not turn on or off appliances or light switches. You should not use your phone near the gas smell. These things could create a spark that could cause an explosion.

Test Your Knowledge

For questions 1 to 3, underline the answer in the passage.

1. What does natural gas smell like?
2. What are visual signs of a natural gas leak?
3. What can a natural gas leak sound like?
4. What steps should you follow when you think there’s a gas leak?
   Circle the correct answer.
   A. Tell a grown-up, leave immediately without turning any appliances on or off, and then have the grown-up call 911 or the gas company when you are safely away from the leak.
   B. Call 911, turn off all the lights, and then get away from the smell.
   C. Assume someone else will report it and continue what you’re doing.

5. What are the DOs and DON’Ts when you think you smell gas?
   Circle the DOs and cross out the DON’Ts.
   Call 911 or the gas company. Tell a grown-up. Light a match. 
   Turn off the lights. Get away from the odor. Ring the doorbell.