

## **SUBURBAN NATURAL GAS COMPANY CUSTOMERS' RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

You can obtain a copy of the Minimum Gas Service Standards by calling the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) toll-free at 1-800-686-7826 from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. weekdays or visit [www.puco.ohio.gov](http://www.puco.ohio.gov). Hearing or speech impaired customers may contact the PUCO via 7-1-1 (Ohio relay service).

### **Contact the PUCO**

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio  
180 E. Broad St.  
Columbus, OH 43215  
(800) 686-PUCO (7826)  
<http://www.puco.ohio.gov>

### **Contact the O.C.C.**

Ohio Consumers' Counsel  
65 E. State St. 7<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Columbus, OH 43215  
(877) PICKOCC (877) 742-5622  
<http://www.pickocc.org>

### **Contact your Natural Gas Company**

#### **Cygnet Office:**

Suburban Natural Gas Company  
211 Front St., PO Box 130  
Cygnet, OH 43413  
(419) 655-2345  
[www.sngco.com](http://www.sngco.com)

#### **Lewis Center Office:**

Suburban Natural Gas Company  
2626 Lewis Center Road  
Lewis Center, OH 43035  
(740) 548-2450  
[www.sngco.com](http://www.sngco.com)

### **Right to Privacy**

Suburban understands how important your privacy is to you. We will not disclose your account number or the account holder's Social Security number without written consent.

### **Rates**

Information on current or past rates and alternatives is available upon request.

### **Usage History**

Information on your usage history shows up on your monthly bill. You can also call us and we can provide you with a 12 month usage 12 month history both in CCFs and dollars as well as payment history.

### **Call Before You Dig**

Before you start any landscape or home improvement project that requires digging, be sure to call 8-1-1 or the Ohio Utilities protection service (OUPS) at 1-800-362-2764, at least 48 hours but no more than 10 working days (excluding weekends and legal holidays). It's the Law and it's for your safety.

## **Your Natural Gas Service**

### **Installation of Service**

When you need to establish new natural gas service, contact Suburban. Suburban will tell you what steps you must take to set up service. Be sure to call two to four weeks before you would like natural gas service to begin, to allow for any construction work or inspections to be completed in time for the service to be ready when you need it. We will typically install your service within three business days if no new construction is required and within 20 business days if your residence requires the installation of a new service line or meter.

We are required to notify you if the installation is expected to take longer than the usual three or 20 days. We must notify you of the delay, the reasons for the delay, the steps being taken to complete the work and the date the installation will be complete. If the rescheduled completion date cannot be met, we will promptly notify you. If it will be more than three business days, we will either notify you in writing or in a manner you would prefer, including the reasons for the delay, the steps being taken to complete the work and the new rescheduled completion date.

### **Verification of Creditworthiness and Deposits**

When you sign up for new natural gas service, Suburban will verify your credit. New customers must meet one or more of the following criteria to establish credit with the company:

- The customer is the owner of the property to be served, or other real property in Suburban's service territory and has demonstrated financial responsibility with regard to the ownership of the property (such as good credit history with a mortgage company, clear deed to property, etc.) or meets the legally-accepted practices to verify credit.
- The customer demonstrates financial responsibility through a variety of information, including, but not limited to, the name of his/her employer, place of employment, position, length of service, letters of reference and names of credit cards.
- The customer has had a prior account with Suburban for the same class of service within the past two years and, in the prior year of service, did not have two consecutive bills containing a past due balance for regulated services provided by Suburban Natural Gas Company, and did not have service disconnected for nonpayment, fraud or tampering.
- The customer can provide a creditworthy guarantor who will pay up to 60-days of service if he/she fails to pay his/her bill.

If you do not meet any of these criteria, you may be required to pay a deposit to establish credit with us. The deposit is security that the final bill will be paid and cannot be used to pay current or delinquent bills. Suburban may not charge you a deposit of more than 130 percent of your estimated average monthly bill for regulated services. The deposit may be increased or lowered after three consecutive billing periods if the deposit you paid differs by 20 percent or more of the amount that would have been required based on the actual usage, while taking into account possible seasonal changes in your usage.

Deposits to Reestablish creditworthiness may be required if the customer's account meets one of the following criteria:

- The customer had the service disconnected due to nonpayment of past due bills, a fraudulent act, tampering, or unauthorized reconnection.
- The customer has not made full payment or payment arrangements for two consecutive bills containing a past due balance for regulated services provided by Suburban.

If Suburban keeps your deposit for more than six months, we will pay 3 percent interest on the deposit. After 12 months, we will review your account and determine if the deposit should be returned. A deposit will be returned if it meets the following criteria:

- The customer has paid his/her bills for service for twelve consecutive months without having had service disconnected for nonpayment.
- The customer has not had more than two occasions on which his/her bill was not paid by the due date.
- The customer is not then delinquent in the payment of his/her bills.

If your service with the company is terminated, either by your request or by disconnection for nonpayment, we will apply the deposit plus any interest accrued to the final bill. You will receive a refund of your deposit for any amount that exceeds the amount owed in the final bill.

## Billing and Payment Options

Your natural gas bill will be mailed to you monthly. The bill will contain the amount you owe and the due date. The current and previous meter readings, the dates of the readings and the total gas consumed will be listed for easy reference. You will receive the bill for monthly service on approximately the same date each month. You have a responsibility to pay your gas bill promptly.

## Payment Methods

Suburban Natural Gas offers several payment options. You may pay electronically, by mail, by phone, or in person.

### **Payment Online**

Register your account on our Web site to pay your bill online with a credit card. Visa, MasterCard and Discover are accepted. There is no charge to pay online with your credit card.

### **In Person**

You may pay in person in our Cygnet or Lewis Center office. Please bring your entire natural gas bill with you when making payment in person.

## **Pay By Mail**

You may pay your bill by mail with a check or money order.

Please use the return envelope provided and include the bottom portion of your bill along with your payment.

Mail to:

Suburban Natural Gas Company  
PO Box 183035  
Columbus, OH 43218-3035

## **Payment Arrangements**

There are several options available for customers having trouble paying their natural gas:

If you are unable to pay your bill, please contact Suburban to make payment arrangements before the payment is due. Suburban offers the following payment plans:

- For customers without arrearages, as a convenience, Suburban offers a budget payment plan. Customers can elect to spread the cost of winter heating more evenly over the year, starting June and continuing through May of the following year. This plan does not reduce the overall cost of home heating but does help to avoid peak winter bills so you can plan household expenditures more conveniently.
- One-sixth plan: a plan that requires six equal monthly payments on the past due balances plus full payment of the current bill.
- One-ninth plan; a plan that requires nine equal monthly payments on the past due balance each month plus a budgeted amount for projected monthly bills. This plan estimates usage for the nine-month period and may be adjusted periodically.
- Winter Heating Season plan: a plan available only during the heating season under which you may pay one-third of your total bill, including the past due balances.
- Percentage of Income Payment Plan Plus (PIPP Plus): If your total household income is at or less than 150 percent of federal poverty guidelines, you might be eligible to pay just six percent of your monthly income or \$10, whichever is greater, for your gas bill each month during the year. If PIPP Plus payments are made in full and on time each month, you'll receive 1/24<sup>th</sup> credit on outstanding arrearages, and the balance of the current month's charges will be forgiven. Participants must re-verify their income annually.
- Graduate Percentage of Income Payment Plan (Graduate PIPP Plus): If your total household income is over 150 percent of federal poverty

guidelines and you have a balance owed on PIPP Plus, you may join Graduate PIPP Plus by paying an installment amount plus budget bill divided by two for 12 months, and receive credits for paying on time and in full.

### Assistance Programs

Additional programs, including the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), are available for qualifying households to help pay utility bills. A fact sheet is available from the PUCO with details and eligibility requirements for these assistance programs. Contact the PUCO at (800) 686-PUCO (7826) to learn more.

### Scheduling Service Appointments

Suburban will provide you with an expected arrival time window of four hours or less for all appointments requiring your presence. If we are unable to meet a scheduled appointment, we will attempt to notify you and arrange a new appointment date and time. When visiting your property, Suburban employees will provide you with photo identification and the reason they are at your property.

### Disconnection and Reconnection of Service

- If you do not pay your natural gas bill by the due date, Suburban will send a 14-day notice before disconnecting your service. This 14-day notice may appear on your bill. To prevent disconnection, you must pay the amount owed by the disconnection date listed on the notice.
- If your service has already been disconnected, you must pay the amount owed. If your service has been shut off for 10 days or less and you make the payment before 12:30 p.m., your service will be restored on the same day. If payment is made after 12:30 p.m., or service has been disconnected for more than 10 business days, service will be reconnected on the next business day. You can make your payment by credit card (Visa, MasterCard, or Discover) over the phone or by check, cash or money order at our offices in Cygnet or Lewis Center. Keep in mind that you may also have to pay a security deposit and a reconnection fee before your service is restored.
- If you wish to guarantee the reconnection of your service on the same day that you make the payment, you must provide the company with proof of your payment by 12:30 p.m. and notify us that you wish to have your service reconnected that same day.
- If a member of your household has a medical condition where the disconnection of natural gas service would be especially dangerous to his/her health, you may be eligible for a medical certification that would retain or restore service for a period of 30 days. If you request it, Suburban will fax a form to your licensed health care professional, who must complete, sign and return the form to us before the shut-off date. If gas service has already been disconnected, we must receive the form within 21 days of shut-off to restore service. A medical certificate completed and signed by your licensed health

care professional can only be used three times per household in a 12-month period.

- ❑ If you feel there is an error on your bill, contact Suburban first. You can contact the PUCO at (800) 686-PUCO (7826) if you are unable to resolve the dispute with the company. However, you should still pay the amount on your bill that is not in dispute. Suburban cannot disconnect service for nonpayment of a billing amount that is in dispute if the customer has registered a complaint with the PUCO. The details of the PUCO complaint process are explained in a later section.
- ❑ Even if you are current on your monthly bill payments, Suburban can disconnect your service if we are unable to access your meter for a reading at least once every 12 months. If your meter is inside your home or behind a locked gate and the company is unable to reach it, you may need to make special arrangements to provide Suburban with access.
- ❑ Suburban can disconnect service for nonpayment year-round, including during the winter months. From November 1 through April 15, natural gas companies must give you an additional 10-day notice before disconnecting your service. Several energy assistance programs are available to help customers stay connected during the winter heating season. Contact the PUCO at (800) 686-PUCO (7826) to learn more.
- ❑ Suburban can also disconnect service in accordance with PUCO rules and regulations for any of the following reasons:
  1. When a customer or consumer uses natural gas in a manner detrimental to the service to other consumers;
  2. When providing service is in conflict or incompatible with any order of the PUCO, a court of law, laws of the state of Ohio or any of its political subdivisions, or of the federal government or its agencies;
  3. When the customer has moved from the service location;
  4. When natural gas creates a safety hazard to consumers or their premises, the public, or to the company's employees or facilities or where, because of conditions beyond the consumer's premises, disconnection of the supply of natural gas is reasonably necessary. Suburban will not restore service until the hazardous condition has been corrected.
  5. When a customer, consumer, or his/her agent does any of the following:
    - a. Prevents utility company personnel from reading the meter for a year or more;
    - b. After notice and a reasonable period of time, prevents utility company personnel from calibrating, maintaining, or replacing the utility company's meter, metering equipment, or other utility company property used to supply service.
    - c. Resorts to any fraudulent act to obtain natural gas service, is the beneficiary of the fraudulent act, or tampers with the utility company's meter, metering equipment or other property used to supply this service.
  6. Upon the customer's request
  7. For nonpayment of regulated services, including nonpayment of security deposits; or
  8. For good cause shown.

## **Your Natural Gas Meter**

### **Meter Readings**

Your natural gas meter measures the amount of gas you use each month and is used by the natural gas company to determine your monthly bill. Suburban representatives have the right to access your meter for the purposes of reading, replacing, repairing, inspecting, or testing the meter.

At a minimum, Suburban must read your meter once every 12 months. Most companies attempt to obtain meter readings at least once every other month. Actual meter readings must also be conducted at your request when you set up new service or terminate service at a location. If your monthly bill has been estimated for two consecutive months or you believe your meter is malfunctioning, you can request up to two additional meter readings per year. If your meter is found to be malfunctioning, your natural gas company will conduct testing and provide a new meter at no charge to you.

From time to time, Suburban representatives may not be able to access your meter. If your meter is inside your home or behind a locked gate and we are unable to read it, an estimated meter reading will appear on your bill.

To determine estimated usage, Suburban uses a formula that takes many factors, including historical usage and the outside temperature, into account. For most customers, the difference between the estimated and actual usage is adjusted when the meter is read the following month. However, for customers who have inaccessible meters, bills are sometimes estimated for several months in a row. If and when this happens, you have the right to read the meter yourself and call in the reading to us. At the customers' request, Suburban will furnish usage history on their account.

### **Reading your own Meter**

Reading your own meter is one of the easiest ways to ensure that you are paying only for the natural gas you use. It is simple to do, and Suburban will allow you to submit your meter reading over the phone.

### **Meter Tests**

While natural gas meters are accurate devices that measure the volume of gas being used at your service address, you may request that we perform a test to verify your meter is registering properly. We will conduct the test within 30 days of receiving your request, and you or your representative may be present. We will notify you of any applicable charges prior to the test.

If we find that the meter's accuracy is outside accepted tolerances, we will waive any charges for performing the test and will install a properly functioning meter at no cost.

If the inaccuracy has resulted in overcharges on your bill, we will determine how long the meter has been malfunctioning and will reasonably compute the amount of credit or

refund on the basis of your usage history, using the rates that were in effect during that period. If we cannot establish the period of the meter's inaccurate measurement, the overcharge period is limited by PUCO regulation to the most recent 12 months or the period since the date of the most recent test, whichever is later. This procedure does not apply if the meter or any other equipment owned by Suburban has been tampered with or reconnected without authorization.

## **Service Line Responsibilities**

Natural Gas is transported from producing wells through large underground pipelines called transmission lines to regulating stations, usually near city limits. The gas then travels within cities and towns through main lines. From the main lines, natural gas is carried to your home or business through service lines which stop at the gas meter. For service line leaks, (piping from the street to the meter), Suburban or its contractor can repair hazardous leaks on gas service lines up to and including the meter. The company will cover the cost unless the leak is a result of damage caused by the property owner, the customer or another party. However, the property owner is responsible for repairing or replacing house lines that extend beyond the meter to the appliances in your home or business.

If Suburban has continued gas service to your service address, but turned off the gas feed to any appliance, a qualified contractor can make repairs and restore service. However, if the company turned off your service at the meter, only a Suburban employee may restore service at the meter. Please call Suburban after repairs are made so that we can inspect the work before restoring full service.

If buried piping isn't maintained, it can become subject to corrosion and leakage over time. For your safety, we inspect gas lines for leakage on a regular basis. If the line is metallic, we also inspect it for corrosion. Our routine inspection covers all gas piping up to and including the meter.

In some circumstances, we are also required to test house lines and inspect gas appliances. If our inspection detects a problem in any portion of your house lines or any of your appliances, we might have to "red tag" the appliance and interrupt your service until you have had it repaired.

Only a qualified heating/cooling contractor or plumber should perform any inspection, installation, repair or replacement of house lines or appliances.

## **Complaint Procedures**

### **Informal Complaints**

If you have a complaint or question about your natural gas service, you should first contact Suburban. The company's address and phone number are listed on your bill.

The company is required to investigate every customer complaint received, and complaints should be resolved within 10 business days. If the company is unable to resolve your complaint within 10 business days, we must provide you with a status report every five business days following the initial period.

If your complaint is not resolved after you have called Suburban, or for general utility information, residential and business customers may contact the public utilities commission of Ohio (PUCO) for assistance at 1-800-686-7826 (toll free) from eight a.m. to five p.m. weekdays, or at <http://www.puco.ohio.gov>. Hearing or speech impaired customers may contact the PUCO via 7-1-1 (Ohio relay service).

The Ohio consumers' counsel (OCC) represents residential utility customers in matters before the PUCO. The OCC can be contacted at 1-877-742-5622 (toll free) from eight a.m. to five p.m. weekdays, or at <http://www.pickocc.org>.

### **Formal Complaints**

If you cannot reach an agreement with your local natural gas company through the PUCO consumer call center, you have the right to file a formal complaint. You can download a copy.

Residential customers have the option to represent themselves in a formal complaint proceeding or may hire an attorney. Corporations must be represented by an attorney during the PUCO formal complaint process.

When you file a formal complaint with the PUCO, the company is given the opportunity to respond to the complaint. A settlement conference may be scheduled by the attorney examiner as a final attempt to informally resolve the complaint. If the PUCO determines that reasonable grounds exist for proceeding with your complaint, the PUCO will mail you a notice setting a hearing date and time. The hearing will take place before an attorney examiner at the PUCO offices in Columbus.

A formal hearing is similar to a court hearing, with a court reporter recording the proceedings. You have the responsibility to prove the merits of the complaint. The attorney examiner will consider the testimony and evidence presented and make a recommendation to the PUCO. The PUCO will then review the evidence and make a decision.