

# First Responder Fact Sheet

## Residential Methane Detector Program

National Grid's **Residential Methane Detector (RMD)** program is now under way in the company's Downstate New York gas service territory. This initiative involves distributing RMDs and natural gas safety brochures to residential customers and educating local first responders about the devices.

This fact sheet addresses some common questions about the RMD program and provides tips for responding to RMD alarm activation.

### What is the purpose of this program?

Recent natural gas incidents have shown that some people do not report gas leaks even when they smell the distinctive, sulfur-like odor characteristic of odorized natural gas. National Grid is distributing the RMDs and companion brochures to address this issue and enhance public safety.

### What is an RMD?

An RMD is a device that provides early warning of leaking natural gas inside a home. Natural gas consists primarily of methane. The RMD constantly measures the concentration of methane in the air and sounds an alarm before dangerous, flammable levels are reached. Some RMDs can also serve as carbon monoxide detectors.

### Is National Grid installing the RMDs for customers?

National Grid is not installing or maintaining the RMDs. We have partnered with Culver



Company, a utility public safety outreach consultant, to develop a simple brochure for residents describing how RMDs work, where to install them and what to do if the device indicates a natural gas leak.

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### How does an RMD indicate a natural gas leak?

An RMD will emit a loud beep about once per second to indicate a gas leak. (RMDs beep at much longer intervals to indicate low batteries or device malfunctions.)

### How should a dispatcher respond to a call regarding RMD alarm activation?

Given the relative risk associated with a gas leak, an activated RMD should be considered credible until proven otherwise.

Dispatchers who receive calls regarding an RMD gas alarm activation sounding 1 beep per second should contact National Grid; initiate an appropriate emergency response; and advise the occupant to evacuate the residence and meet the responding fire officer

at a safe location at least 100 feet away and upwind from the structure.

### What steps should emergency responders take upon arrival at the scene of an activated RMD alarm?

Treat an RMD gas alarm as you would respond to a report of an odor of gas in a structure, and take the steps below.

The following are basic response tips for responding to RMD alarm activations. For comprehensive natural gas leak response guidance please visit the National Grid Utility Safety Website: [firstresponder.ngridsafety.com](http://firstresponder.ngridsafety.com).

### Upon arrival

- 1. Approach the incident scene cautiously.** Park safely at least 100 feet from the front of the building away from manhole covers, gas valve covers and storm sewer grates.
- 2. Meet with the reporting party** to obtain information about the location of the detector that is sounding and the location of gas-fed appliances.
- 3. Clear the building of all occupants and bystanders.** Do not enter the building unless you are wearing full personal protective equipment and self-contained breathing apparatus.

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### Upon arrival (cont.)

**4. Eliminate any potential sources of ignition, such as vehicle engines, flame-producing devices and anything that could produce sparks.** Use intrinsically safe radios and flashlights.

**5. Do not ring doorbells or turn on or off any electrical switches** as a spark from these devices could ignite the gas. Do not step on a doormat; friction from your boots could create a spark of static electricity.



**6. Monitor the atmosphere around the structure using multiple monitors.** If gas concentrations are well below the lower explosive limit of 5% gas in air and you can enter the structure without risk, monitor inside the building to find the source of the leak.

### Once a leak is confirmed

- 1. Stage apparatus out of the collapse zone of involved structures,** upwind and away from the hazard area at a distance of at least 330 feet.
- 2. Isolate the leak area for at least 330 feet in all directions.**

**3. Control an indoor natural gas leak by turning off gas at the service valve before the meter,** provided you have been trained to do so. Follow your department's guidelines with respect to operating gas service valves.

- After the service valve has been closed, do not open it under any circumstances. Only utility representatives can restore gas service.
- **Inform National Grid of any service valve you have closed and its precise location.**



**4. If ventilation is indicated, it must be coordinated by the National Grid emergency representative in conjunction with your incident commander (IC).** When it has been determined that ventilation is safe, ventilate the building from the top down using natural air currents.