



RICHMOND'S GAS UTILITY

Richmond operates the third oldest gas utility, providing natural gas service to the region since 1851. Presently operating as Richmond Gas Works (RGW) – a division of the Department of Public Utilities – the current service area is the City of Richmond, Henrico County and portions of Chesterfield and Hanover.

Regulations

Richmond's gas utility is governed by and remains in compliance with strict regulations that ensure public safety, including the mandated monitoring of gas leaks. Regulations are created by the Pipeline & Hazardous Material Safety Administration (PHMSA) – a division of the U.S. Department of Transportation. The State Corporation Commission inspects and regularly audits the utility to ensure compliance.

By the Numbers

Miles of pipeline (mains and services):	3,213
Various Leak Grades repaired in 2022:	602
Response rate to Grade 1 leaks (Hazardous):	100%

Gas Network and Pipeline Material

The City purchases natural gas from suppliers and takes possession at gate stations across the region. A network of distribution lines transports gas to homes and businesses. Legacy lines were made of cast and ductile iron that is prone to leakage as it ages. Subsequently, the City now uses high-density polyethylene (HDPE) and coated welded steel.

In addition to using HDPE and welded steel material for new gas installations, the gas utility has been proactively renewing the aging infrastructure since 1992. The miles of cast and ductile iron renewed has averaged 15-mile-per-year over the life of the program. The City was recently awarded \$10.0 M in grant funds to accelerate the renewals.

Miles of Cast and Ductile Iron

How it started	How it's going
650	180

Gas Safety and Leaks

While natural gas is a safe and reliable energy source, leaks do occur mostly due to legacy pipelines. The gas utility identifies and evaluates leaks on the entire distribution system in accordance with a federally mandated leak survey program, in addition to evaluating those reported by the public. All gas leaks are taken seriously, evaluated immediately, and assigned a grade to indicate the potential hazard.

RICHMOND'S GAS UTILITY

Grading Scale

Richmond Gas Works, as well as the majority of all other natural gas operators in the United States, abides by the Gas Piping Technology Committee guidelines when evaluating and classifying both above and below-ground natural gas leaks.

Grade	Description	Action Taken
Grade 1	Any leak which represents an existing or probable hazard to persons or property	Immediate repair or continuous action until the conditions are no longer hazardous
Grade 2	Any leak that is below 4% gas in air mixture in manholes, vaults, catch basins, confined spaces, or other small substructures where gas could migrate and create a hazard	Scheduled for repair and continuously monitored and re-evaluated at intervals not exceeding 15 months
Grade 3	Minor gas leaks, less than 1% gas in air mixture in confined spaces where the leak could migrate or become hazardous to life or property	Scheduled for repair and continuously monitored and re-evaluated at intervals not exceeding 15 months

Gas Pressure Control

To ensure the safety of gas through pressure control, RGW has a SCADA (supervisor control and data acquisition) room that is manned 24/7. This control room monitors gas pressure and flows throughout the network, gate stations, remote pressure and large customer sites as well as tracks gas distribution. This monitoring will alert the team to any safety issues allowing for an immediate response.

Gas Bills and Affordability

Natural gas is an economical choice for home heating. Richmond Gas Works is dedicated to providing safe, reliable and competitively priced natural gas. The gas charge is based on three components – the distribution charge and customer charge, which are fixed costs, and the Purchased Gas Cost (PGC). By law, Richmond Gas Works must pass on the cost of natural gas purchased and delivered to customers, dollar for dollar, without any markup. Previously, adjustments to the PGC were calculated and billed on a quarterly basis. Since July 2022, the PGC is adjusted monthly to better reflect actual market conditions.

Customers who experience difficulty paying their natural gas bill may be eligible for bill payment assistance and are encouraged to seek help before bills become unmanageable. RGW offers information and programs year-round. Customers are also encouraged to enroll in the Equal Monthly Payment Plan (EMPP) to avoid seasonal fluctuations in their monthly bill or apply for assistance through the MetroCare Program, if needed. Convenient and flexible payment plans are also available for those needing assistance paying past due account balances, with as little as \$10 down and repayment terms up to 36 months.

For information on any of the assistance programs, visit rva.gov/public-utilities or call 804-646-4646.

If anyone suspects a gas leak, they should leave the area and go to where the smell is no longer present and call 911.