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Know Where Your Utility Main Shutoffs Are and How to Operate Them

Water, gas and electric utilities produce a constant supply to your home and if there is a failure in a pipe, valve, circuit, equipment or an appliance, then uninterrupted flow of any utility source can pose, at a minimum, serious damage to your home and at worst lethal consequences. In case of an emergency all responsible adults in the home should know where and how to operate the main shutoffs for the water, gas, and electric utilities.

Information, instruction and illustrations for shutting down each utility are provided in the following pages.

It is also important the area around each utility shutoff is kept clear of obstructions such as structures, furniture, storage items or, in the case of an outside gas main, blocking foliage to allow quick identification and easy access.

Water Shutoff Instructions

The main water shutoff will be located near the water meter for city water supply or the well water entrance pipe for private water supply.

The shutoff valves used in private water well systems are the same as city systems so the procedure to turn off the water for both systems is the same.

Location - City Supplied Water

For city supplied water, the main water shutoff is easily identified by the water meter attached to the entrance pipe. See *Fig. 1* at right. In Michigan the water meter will be located inside the house (look in the basement if you have one, otherwise a utility room).

There may be one valve on the city side of the water meter or two valves, one on each side of the meter. If you have two valves only one will need to be turned off, and while it shouldn't matter which one, it is best to turn off the city side valve.

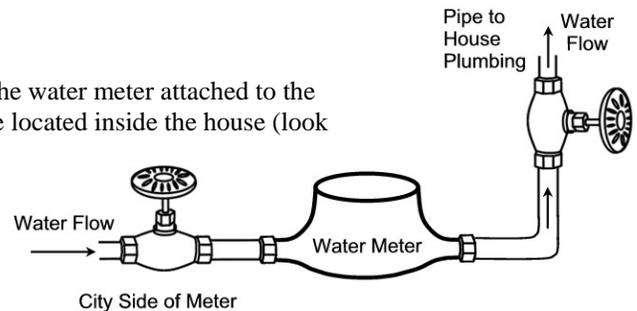


Fig. 1

Location - Private Well Supplied Water

For private well systems, look for a shutoff valve near the pressure tank. The well supply line coming through the wall is connected to the pressure tank and continues on to the main water supply pipe to the house. The shutoff valve should be on this main supply pipe just after the pressure tank connection. See *Fig. 2* at right. This may be a little more difficult to find in private well systems because additional appliances such as water softeners and purifiers may make the plumbing appear more completed and intimidating. If you need to, ask someone who is knowledgeable about your system installation to show you where the main water shutoff valve is.

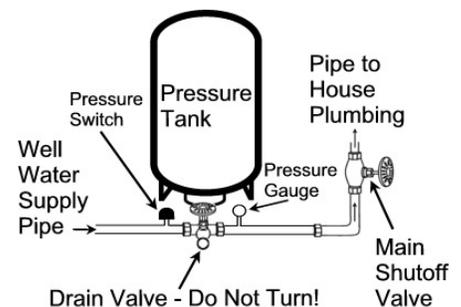


Fig. 2

Water Main Shutoff Valve

There are two types of valves typically used, a gate valve or a ball valve. See *Fig. 3* below. The gate valve is closed by turning the turn wheel clockwise a number of revolutions until it stops turning. The ball valve requires only a quarter turn of the lever handle until it is perpendicular to the pipe, at this position it is shut off.

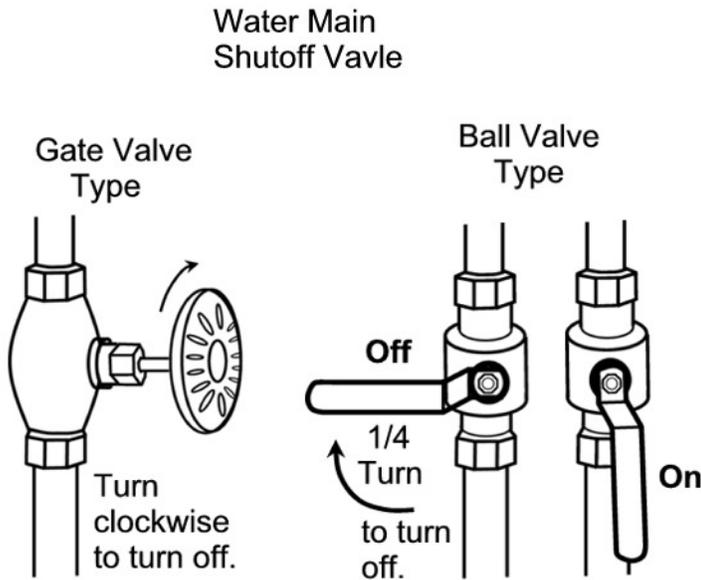


Fig. 3

Complimentary Instructional Main Water Shutoff Tag

Because of the importance of knowing where the main water shutoff is and how to shut it off, a tag with the above pictorial and written instruction on shutting down the water main has been provided to you during the inspection as a safety service.

Hang the instructional Main Water Shutoff tag from the shutoff valve at the water meter or the water supply line from the well pump. This will help to quickly locate where the main water shutoff is and provide quick instruction in an emergency.

Example

Pictured in *Fig. 4* at right is the complimentary Main Water Shutoff tag strung from the main shutoff valve that is located in the basement.



Fig. 4

Gas Shutoff Instructions

The gas main shutoff is located near the gas meter. The gas meter may be located either inside the house or on the outside. Under the meter you will find a handle-less valve in the gas line that enters the meter (see Fig 5 at right).

A large adjustable wrench will be needed in order to shut off this valve. If you do not have a 12 inch adjustable wrench, then buy one and keep it hanging on a nail in the basement near the meter if inside, or in a convenient place inside where you can find it quickly if the meter is outside. *Note: even though you may have an 8 or 10 inch adjustable wrench that fits the tang of the shutoff valve, still get a longer handle 12 inch wrench. Sometimes these valves can be stiff and difficult to turn and a smaller wrench may not give you the leverage necessary to turn the shutoff valve.*



Fig. 5

When open, the tang of the shutoff valve will be in alignment with the direction of the gas line. To turn the gas off, place the wrench on the tang of the shutoff valve and give it only a quarter turn. The tang should now be perpendicular to the direction of the gas line and the two holes of the valve assembly in alignment. See Fig. 6 below.

Note: Often gas shutoff valves do not have stops and you may be able to keep turning the valve beyond a quarter turn. You must stop when the tang is perpendicular to the gas line. If you go beyond a quarter turn then you will be reopening the valve.

Gas Main Shutoff Valve

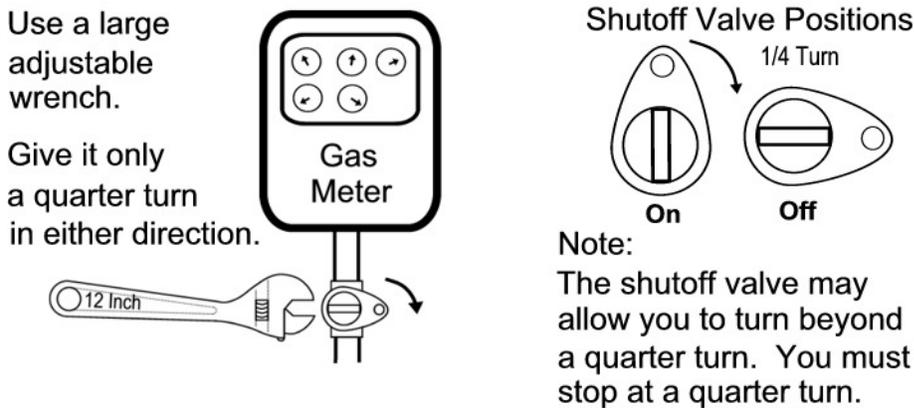


Fig. 6

The Do's and Don'ts If You Have a Gas Leak

Don'ts

- **Don't** light matches or lighter.
- **Don't** turn a light on or off.
- **Don't** use a telephone (portable, cellular or regular) in the area gas is present.
- **Don't** operate any electrical switch or electronic device.

Do's

- **Do** open windows to dissipate gas.
- **Do** shutoff branch valve supplying gas to the leak or if necessary, the main valve at the meter.
- **Do** call your gas provider. They will respond promptly, usually at no charge.

Complimentary Instructional Main Gas Shutoff Tag

Because of the importance of knowing where the gas main is and how to shut it off, a tag with pictorial and written instruction on shutting down the gas main has been provided to you during the inspection as a safety service.

If your gas meter is located outside the home then find a place inside where you can quickly find the complimentary Main Gas Shutoff tag in an emergency. It is a good idea to hang the tag on a nail or hook in a closet or laundry or workbench area along with the large wrench necessary for turning the gas shutoff valve.

If your gas meter is located inside the home then hang the tag from the meter shutoff valve along with the large wrench necessary for turning the gas valve off.

Example:

Pictured in *Fig. 7* at right is the complimentary Main Gas Shutoff tag with the Do's and Don'ts information printed on the back of the tag. Since, in this case, the gas main is on the outside of the house, the tag is hung from a nail on the inside of the stairwell to the basement. Along with the tag is the 12 inch adjustable wrench needed to turn the gas off.

If the gas meter were on the inside of your home you would hang the tag from the gas meter shutoff valve.



Fig. 7

Electric Shutoff Instructions

The main shutoff for electricity is located in the electrical service panel (metal box that hangs on the wall). There are two major electrical service panel types, fused and breaker switch. Each type of panel is illustrated below.

Fused Panel Type

Fused type electrical service panels are typically found in older homes. See *Fig. 8* at below. The fused panel will have a pull-out that serves as the main disconnect for the panel box. Illustrated below is the simple instruction for disconnecting the electrical supply to one of these panels.

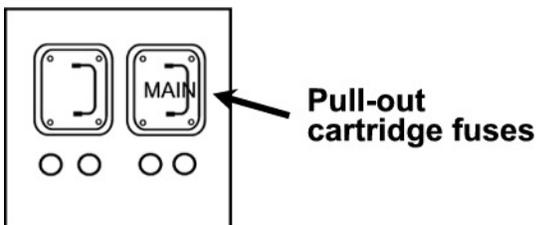


Fig. 8

Circuit Breaker Panel Type

There are two types of breaker switch panels; those with toggle switches that operate similar to a light switch (see *Fig. 9 below*) or those that have push type switches (Pushmatics - see *Fig. 10*) that turn on or off by pushing the switch in. Illustrated below is each type with the simple instruction for disconnecting the electrical supply to one of these panels

Toggle Switch Circuit Breaker

Switch off Main switch if one is present.
(Usually at top of panel.)

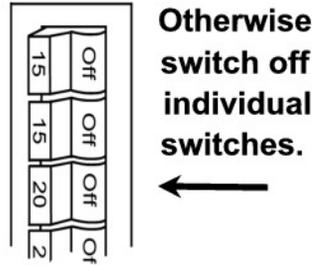
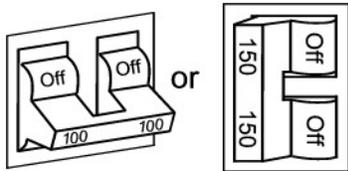


Fig. 9

Pushmatic Circuit Breaker

Push in Main switch if one is present.
(Usually at top of panel.)

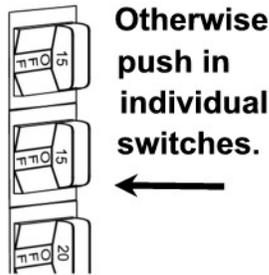
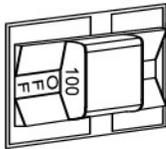


Fig. 10

Complimentary Instructional Electrical Main Shutoff Tag

Because of the importance of knowing where the electrical main is and how to shut it off, a tag with pictorial and written instruction on shutting down the electrical main has been provided to you during the inspection as a safety service. The tag is magnetic and should be placed on the metal electrical panel door. This will help to quickly locate where the main electrical shutoff is and provide quick instruction in an emergency.

Example

Pictured in *Fig. 11* at right is the complimentary Main Electric Shutoff tag attached to the metal electric panel door with a magnet.



Fig. 11