



# My Nat and Gus Natural Gas Activity Book

## Teacher's Guide

### INTRODUCTION

Natural gas is a valued source of energy. It is a fossil fuel used for heating air and water, cooking, and producing electricity. Composed mainly of methane, natural gas is a colorless, odorless gas that is lighter than air. When ancient plants and animals were buried under swamps, lakes, or mud, they decayed, slowly forming methane gas. This gas became trapped under layers of solid rock. Natural gas is found underground in the same areas that contain crude oil (petroleum). Natural gas is used in many ways in our homes, work places, and schools. It is also used as a clean, efficient fuel for transportation. It is important to stay safe around natural gas, as it is flammable. It is also a good idea to conserve it, as our supply of it is finite.

### Pages 2-3: SOURCES OF ENERGY

#### Background/Discussion

Energy is the ability to change or move matter. Without energy there would be no motion, no light, and no heat, and life would not exist: food would not grow. Most of the energy on earth comes from the sun. Ask the following:

1. Where do you get your energy? (*food*)
2. Where do the appliances in your home get energy? (*sources like electricity or natural gas*)
3. Where do your cars and buses get energy? (*gasoline, natural gas*)

### Pages 4-5: FORMATION AND DISTRIBUTION OF NATURAL GAS

#### Background/Discussion

Geologists (scientists who study the earth) send shock waves down from the surface to try to locate gas deposits. They measure how long it takes the waves to bounce back. A derrick is constructed to support the equipment needed for drilling and for hoisting and lowering pipe into the well. In some offshore locations, drilling platforms are used to obtain gas.

When gas is found it is pumped to a processing plant where other substances found with the gas are removed. After processing it goes through underground steel pipelines with the aid of compressors. Compressors are large pumps that push the gas through the pipelines at about 15 m.p.h.

Before reaching us the gas passes through a regulator station that controls the amount of gas pumped into the smaller pipes that lead to our homes, businesses, and factories. At this point a chemical (mercaptan) that can smell like sulfur or rotten eggs is added to the gas so leaks can be detected.

1. Why is natural gas called a “fossil fuel?” (*It was formed from the remains of plants and animals.*)
2. How do you think gas is obtained from below the surface of the earth? (*through wells*)
3. How is gas sent from where it is found to homes, schools, and businesses? (*through underground pipes*)

#### Activities

1. To understand how natural gas is found deep underground, have students make clay models of the rock layers in the earth. Rock layers can be different thicknesses and shapes. Use red clay for natural gas and

green clay for oil. When finished, punch a hole down to the natural gas and oil layers and put a straw in it to simulate a pipe.

2. Fill an aquarium half full of water. Blow up a balloon and hold the opening closed as you submerge the balloon in water. Relate this to natural gas trapped beneath impermeable rock (like clay). Discuss what would happen if you drilled a hole to where the natural gas was trapped. Let the air out of the balloon under water.
3. Fill several small-necked glass jars (8 oz.) with a mixture of  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of soil and  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup of vegetable scraps (carrot and cucumber peels) and grass clippings. Stretch a balloon over the opening of each jar and secure it well. With a magic marker, mark the level of the mixture that you start with. Place the jars in different places (direct sunlight, artificial light, in a dark place, etc.). Observe the jars for a week. Chart the results, both the level of each mixture and what happens to each balloon. (Depending on the contents of the mixture and the amount of heat in each location, mixtures will decompose at different rates and produce different amounts of gas.)

## PAGES 6-11: USES OF NATURAL GAS

### Background/Discussion

A compressed form of natural gas can be used in specially adapted cars, buses, and trucks known as natural gas vehicles (NGVs). Natural gas is the cleanest burning fuel available for transportation because it puts less pollutants into the air than other gases. Natural gas is used in homes, schools, businesses, and factories. About 25% of the natural gas used in the United States goes to homes for heating, cooling, clothes drying, cooking, and providing hot water. Natural gas provides heating and cooling for stores and offices and is used for cooking in restaurants. Natural gas is also used to make electricity. Industry uses natural gas as a fuel, and transforms it chemically into plastics, fabrics, and durable goods.

Most of the natural gas we use comes from within the United States. This helps improve our energy self-sufficiency and eliminates concerns about overseas transportation. Because natural gas is abundant and easy to process, it costs less than many other fuels. Using natural gas in motor vehicles can improve air quality because it is a clean-burning fuel. Natural gas pollutes less than other fuels.

Have you ever suffered because of “dirty” or polluted air? How did it affect you? Why is it important to keep the air clean? *(It is not healthy for us to breathe polluted air. Many respiratory disorders are aggravated by air pollutants. Plants and animals that we depend on also suffer from polluted air.)*

1. Which type of fuel is the cleanest? *(Natural gas emits fewer harmful by-products than other fossil fuels.)*
2. What equipment in a restaurant would use natural gas? *(water heater, fryer, range/oven, steamer, grill)*
3. How would natural gas be used in offices and stores? *(heating air and water)*

### Activities

- Survey your home to determine which appliances run on natural gas and which appliances could run on natural gas. *(Possible answers include: natural gas furnace, barbecue, range, water heater, dryer, fireplace, swimming pool heater, and outdoor lighting.)*
- With the help of an adult, locate where gas lines lead to and from appliances such as the water heater, furnace, and stove. Notice how the vents are connected.

## Pages 12, 14-15: NATURAL GAS SAFETY

### Background/Discussion

Natural gas is a safe fuel when used properly. Stress to your students, however, that homes should not be heated with gas ovens, and that you should never put toys or papers near gas appliances like furnaces, water heaters, or the stove top. Tell them that there is a risk of fire and explosion from gas leaks. That is why when you smell gas you should leave the house. Do not turn a light on or off, unplug an appliance, or use a flashlight, a match, or a telephone, because a spark from these could cause an explosion. Make sure children know that they should call for help from a neighbor's house. (It should be a neighbor that they know.)

1. What senses do you have? (*sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch*)
2. Which of your senses can you use to detect natural gas? (*Natural gas has a chemical [mercaptan] added to it that can smell like sulfur or rotten eggs. **Safety Note:** A slight odor of natural gas may mean that a pilot light has gone out. A strong odor means you should leave the home immediately.*)
3. Why is it dangerous to hang from gas pipes? (*Pipes could break and gas would leak out.*)

### Activities

- Do a natural gas leak drill in the classroom. When you return, or while outside, discuss why you have these rules and drills.
- As a class, create mini safety charts to list natural gas safety rules.
- At home, practice a safety drill for getting your family out of the house safely. (Stress not to turn on lights, and not to use flashlights, matches, or telephones.)