

***Washington Gas,
Contractors & Repairs:
What You Need to Know
Before You Call***



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Questions and Answers on Washington Gas Repair Services

Q: What do I do if I have a problem with a gas appliance or gas heating system?

A: You can call Washington Gas at 703-750-1000. Washington Gas will either send one of its own service technicians, or WG may opt to send one of its contractors, also called Trade Associates, to your home.

You can also call an independent contractor.

Q: What is the difference between Washington Gas employees and Trade Associates?

A: According to Washington Gas, its service technicians can make minor adjustments and check out safety concerns. They are not equipped to make most repairs. Trade Associates, however, can make repairs and can sell equipment if an appliance or system is beyond repair.

Washington Gas technicians are employees of the Company, whereas the Trade Associates are not. WG has a contractual relationship with its Trade Associates and pays them for making service calls on WG's behalf.

Q: How will I know if the person who comes to my door is affiliated with Washington Gas?

A: Washington Gas contractors are supposed to make their service vehicles clearly visible from 100 feet and display a natural gas trade associates sign. In addition, they should present a photo identification/ Washington Gas trade associates program badge to you.

Q: Is Washington Gas responsible for the work performed by the Trade Associates?

A: In its Trade Associate Code of Conduct, WG states it will monitor and evaluate the performance of its Trade Associates and will swiftly take action to discipline any Trade Associate who violates the Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct requires Trade Associates to keep scheduled appointments, properly identify themselves as WG Trade Associates, and obtain your written authorization before performing any work or ordering equipment, among other things.

It is important to remember, however, that Trade Associates are not representing Washington Gas when discussing the sale of an appliance.

Q: What should I do if I have a complaint about a Trade Associate?

A: Call the Washington Gas customer service center at 703-750-1000.

Questions and Answers on Washington Gas Service Charges

Q: Will I be charged if Washington Gas makes a service call to my home?

A: Effective August 1, 1997, under rates approved by the Public Service Commission, Washington Gas service charges vary, depending on whether the service is provided during business hours or after hours. The new WG service fee schedule is as follows:

Service	Weekdays and Saturdays, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.	Sundays, holidays, and after hours
Pilot lighting	\$29	\$50
Pilot turn-off	\$16	\$25
Reconnection	\$45	\$70
Appliance adjustment	\$45	\$45

Q: What is the appliance adjustment fee, and how does it work?

A: Effective August 1, 1997, Washington Gas began implementing this new charge, approved by the Public Service Commission, for non-safety related, non-diagnostic service work. Previously, Washington Gas did not charge individuals for this work; rather, these costs were embedded in rates and spread among all ratepayers.

If Washington Gas cannot complete all safety-related and diagnostic service work within 15 minutes, the Company charges a flat fee of \$45 for any additional services which may be necessary.

However, the customer will be given the option of permitting WG's employee to continue working or of obtaining referrals from the WG employee and having an independent contractor continue the work.

Q: If I decide to use an independent contractor instead of WG, will WG disconnect my gas service?

A: WG may discontinue gas service only if it is necessary to ensure the safety of the premises.

Q: Will the service charges be less if I decide to hire an independent contractor rather than Washington Gas?

A: The rates of independent contractors are not regulated by the PSC, so there is no set schedule. The next panel has tips on choosing an independent contractor.

Consumer Tips on Hiring an Independent Contractor

Before choosing a contractor. . .

It is always a good idea to talk with friends and family to get referrals. You can also call the D.C. Better Business Bureau (202-393-8000) to determine if there are any unresolved consumer complaints on file with a particular contractor.

It is also a good idea to get several estimates before having work done, especially if it is a large job. Be sure to get a written copy of all estimates.

Look before you leap . . .

Ask for the contractor's name, street address (not just P.O. box), and telephone number. Find out if the contractor has a current license from the D.C. Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (202-727-7850).

Remember, contractors make money by selling expensive parts and appliances. Be wary if a contractor says you need an expensive repair or replacement of an appliance. Be sure to get a second opinion!

If you have a complaint . . .

Appliance repair is not a service regulated by the Public Service Commission. (Because of this, OPC has no statutory authority to represent you in this type of complaint.) If you have a complaint, you can contact the Better Business Bureau (202-393-8000) or the D.C. Superior Court Multi-Door Dispute Resolution Program (202-879-1549)