CNG Vehicle Fuel Cylinder Inspection deadline is December 12, 2014 (details below). Failure to meet the deadline will result in suspension of your fueling account.

CNG Vehicle Code Compliance and Safety

California Code of Regulations, Title 13, section 934.1 requires that natural gas powered vehicles comply with National Fire Protection Association Standard 52 (NFPA 52), which requires an inspection be performed of compressed natural gas (CNG) vehicle fuel cylinders at least every three years or 36,000 miles.

CNG cylinders operate at pressures as high as 3750 or 4500 pounds per square inch gauge (PSIG) depending on the design standard of the cylinder. The safety risks associated with a properly installed and maintained cylinder are low. However, cylinder ruptures have occurred in the United States and abroad due to lack of maintenance as required by applicable codes and standards. The amount of energy released during a rupture is capable of causing serious or fatal injuries to vehicle occupants or people nearby. These ruptures are usually associated with cylinder integrity shortfalls that would have been discovered during an inspection by a qualified inspector.

PG&E shares the industry concern that some customers may not be adhering to inspection requirements mandated by code. This lapse increases the likelihood that cylinder integrity problems are present that have gone unnoticed and increases the safety risks to people inside or near the CNG vehicle.

Concerns also exist regarding CNG fuel system modifications that have not been properly engineered, installed or maintained and are not fit for service or otherwise present an unacceptable safety risk. Examples of such modifications are as follows:

1. One of the most common examples of these modifications is the installation of a 3600 PSIG fuel receptacle on a vehicle with a CNG fuel cylinder and fuel system designed to operate at 3000 PSIG, which allows the cylinder to be filled to a pressure higher than it was designed to accommodate. This is extremely dangerous and may result in a serious or potentially fatal injury.

2. Another condition PG&E has encountered is ongoing use of expired cylinders. Once the expiration date shown on the cylinder label has passed, the cylinder must be removed from service and replaced with a new cylinder. Until recently cylinders typically held a 15-year service life. Modern cylinders often have a 20-year life. There is no process of cylinder requalification. Cylinders must be removed from service and destroyed upon reaching the expiration date in accordance with the cylinder manufacturer’s instructions. Cylinder expiration dates are posted on each cylinder label and may also be found on a label inside the fuel door or in the engine compartment.

PG&E’s new CNG fuel system inspection policy, detailed on following page, will significantly reduce the risk that PG&E’s CNG customers are using unsafe vehicles.
CNG Fuel System Inspection Policy Change

PG&E is addressing CNG cylinder safety risks with a requirement, approved by the CPUC through Advice Letter 3485-G, that, as a customer of PG&E's CNG services, you must provide a signed CNG fuel system inspection certificate for any vehicle to be fueled at a PG&E CNG facility. A copy of the complete Advice Filing 3485-G is available at the following site: pge.com/rates/tariffs/m3/pdf/3485-G.pdf

PG&E requires that completed inspection records for each vehicle be submitted to PG&E by December 12, 2014, to avoid account suspension. Suspended accounts can be reactivated within six months of a suspension by providing the required documentation. After six months of suspension, accounts will be closed permanently.

The inspection consists of a completed Certificate of Inspection of Compressed Natural Gas Vehicle Fuel System form (PG&E Fuelling Agreement, Exhibit B) accompanied by the automobile repair/inspection business work order showing the business letterhead, date, qualified inspector name and qualifications summary, and the results of the inspection.

Several retail automotive repair and inspection businesses within PG&E’s service territory employ qualified inspectors and offer inspections to the general public. A partial list of inspection service providers is attached to help you find a certified inspector. PG&E will maintain a current list of known qualified inspectors on PG&E’s Natural Gas Vehicle (NGV) website pge.com/cng. PG&E does not endorse or recommend the service providers on this list, and other service providers likely exist.

If you already have a current fuel cylinder inspection

If your fuel cylinder has been inspected within the last three years you may provide PG&E with documentation of that inspection for our consideration as an alternative to the completion of Items 1 through 13 of the approved Certificate of Inspection (Exhibit B). Depending on the content of your documentation, PG&E may require an additional inspection documented on PG&E’s form. Please allow us to review your existing documentation as soon as possible to help make a determination in advance of the December 12, 2014 deadline.

Regardless, PG&E will require that current customer and vehicle information be completely filled out on each Certificate of Inspection form for each vehicle to be fueled at PG&E facilities. PG&E will require Items 14–22 and the final inspector and customer signatures be completed on the Certificate of Inspection form by a qualified inspector and provided to PG&E by December 12, 2014, since this portion of the inspection addresses the safety of equipment that may not be inspected during a standard CNG fuel cylinder inspection.

As has always been PG&E’s policy, if PG&E encounters information that gives PG&E reason to believe the integrity of a customer’s vehicle fuel system is unsatisfactory, or a customer demonstrates unsafe behavior in any way, PG&E will suspend or terminate service to that customer. If PG&E discovers that inspection documents and/or inspector work orders have been falsified in any way, PG&E will permanently suspend the fueling account.

If your vehicle and CNG cylinders are less than three years old

Send PG&E proof of the vehicle model year, such as a copy of the vehicle registration, title or bill of sale, as well as a photo of the cylinder expiration decal inside the fuel door or in the engine compartment. PG&E will review the provided evidence of vehicle and CNG cylinder age and will make a determination when the first cylinder inspection is required.

Ongoing inspection requirements

PG&E will require customers to have current inspection records (within three years or 36,000 miles of previous records) on file for any vehicle used at a PG&E CNG fueling facility. This requirement has no expiration and is expected to be ongoing for the life of the PG&E fuelling agreement.

If a customer is found filling a vehicle that does not have a current Certificate of Inspection on file, the customer account will be suspended or terminated pending further investigation.

CNG Hose Drive-Off Policy Change

A “hose drive-off” event is defined as a customer driving away from the CNG fuel dispenser without first disconnecting the dispensing nozzle/hose from the vehicle. Hose drive-offs present a serious safety risk to anyone standing nearby due to the whipping reaction of the hose breaking away from the vehicle as it drives off. In addition, the separation of a hose breakaway can result in the release of flammable gas.

Do not re-enter your vehicle during fuelling as this is the leading cause of hose drive-offs. PG&E will be monitoring customers. Sitting in your vehicle while fuelling is considered unsafe and may lead to account suspension or termination.

For any hose drive-off event, you are required to notify PG&E immediately using the Emergency Phone at the CNG station.

If a customer drives away from a PG&E dispenser without first disconnecting the fueling hose resulting in a hose separation (hose drive-off) or any other damage to equipment, PG&E may:

• Suspend or permanently terminate access to PG&E fueling stations in situations where PG&E judges such action to be appropriate;
• Require the customer contact PG&E to arrange for retraining on the fuel dispensing processes, to reduce the likelihood of subsequent hose drive-offs; and/or
• Hold the customer financially liable for all repair costs.

Customers are expected to self-report hose drive-offs and equipment damage. If a customer chooses not to self-report a hose drive-off or equipment damage, the customer’s account will be suspended or permanently closed.

These changes to our policies are driven by our commitment to the safety of customers like you, the general public and PG&E’s employees.

For more information regarding PG&E’s CNG safety policies, please visit pge.com/cng or contact PG&E’s NGV Customer Services by email at ngvinfo@pge.com or call PG&E’s NGV Customer Service line at 1-800-484-4448.