Gas shutoff valves

Houses with natural gas have a shutoff valve (Fig. A) located just before the gas meter. This valve, often called the street-side valve, is normally a rectangular nub (Photo 1). When the long side of the nub or handle is parallel to the incoming gas line, it's open and the gas is flowing. When it's turned a quarter turn, perpendicular to the incoming pipe, it's closed. The street-side main shutoff valve must be opened and closed with a wrench, and, truth be told, gas companies don't want you operating this valve; they only want their own employees, plumbing and heating contractors and fire department personnel to use it. They'd rather you use the house-side main shutoff valve located after the meter (Photo 2).

The street-side main shutoff valve is usually a ball valve. If your home is newer and you find a flexible copper pipe running from the meter into your utility room, you probably have a higher pressure gas system. In this case, the inside main shutoff valve (3) is open and the gas is flowing. When probably near your furnace or water heater, it's turned a quarter turn, perpendicular, just before it enters a flying wall. This service valve will usually be located in the flying wall. This service valve will usually be the end of a fixed pipe and connected to a flexible supply pipe called the appliance connector. Take care not to kink or pinch this flexible pipe.

In addition to the house-side main shutoff valve, individual gas appliances should have a shutoff valve to make repairs or new installations without cutting off gas to your entire home. Most service valves are single-lever ball valves; when turned, handle parallel to the line means gas is flowing, perpendicular means it's cut off. On dryers and ranges, this valve is usually hidden behind them and can only be reached by sliding the appliance out from the side. This service valve will usually be located near the appliance. Most pros replace the flexible connector when they replace the appliance. If you discover you have a faulty supply workshousehouseHow a worksworkshousehouseHow a worksworkshousehouseHow a worksworkshousehouseHow a