



# A foolproof program

## Proper safety procedures in lockstep with compliance, risk mitigation

**P**ropane marketers are faced with a variety of challenges regarding safety, compliance and risk management in today's market.

Risk management should be a priority for all propane marketers. Developing and implementing an effective safety program in your company will provide management with an effective tool to enhance compliance and risk mitigation.

The goal of your company's safety program should be focused on employing industry best practices and following local, state and national codes and regulations.

There are many components to consider when developing a safety program for your company. Marketers need to develop a vision; establish goals and expectations; implement consistent plans, programs and procedures; and take corrective action when required.

Policies and procedures should be written, consistent, current, monitored and included as part of the company orientation program. They should be specific and clearly identify company rules and how they apply. Clearly defined policies and procedures enable the workforce to understand individual and team responsibilities and foster a climate of collaboration and pride.

### Documentation and compliance

A critical and often overlooked area is safety documentation and compliance information.

Many propane marketers continue to use a paper and file system. This method results in a lot of human error

and impedes the ability to access critical data and information that managers require.

Most service technicians or drivers today are required to complete a variety of tasks as they service their customers. Many service technicians are completing their safety inspections on paper forms, which get processed back at the office and eventually filed away. Collected data shows that 30 percent of all safety documentation in these files is typically inaccurate and/or incomplete, which creates unnecessary risk.

The solution to these common mistakes is technology. Utilizing information technology, along with a systematic approach to managing important safety documentation and recordkeeping, will allow management to effectively improve its safety practices and the company's risk profile.

Every propane marketer has a range of tasks and responsibilities in managing the propane business. Marketers are constantly multitasking and rarely have the time or resources to analyze important customer safety documentation. Preparing for an audit or inspection can be an extremely laborious task. Preparing the requested documentation for litigation, all of which will be carefully scrutinized, will consume many hours of employees' time.

### Current program review

Consider reviewing your current safety documentation and compliance program, which is an area critical to maintaining safety for your customers and employees.

As a manager, ask yourself these questions. Or better yet, at your com-

pany's next safety meeting, review these questions with your staff, and be honest.

- Do I have policies and procedures for my organization? Are they written? Are they updated and reviewed?

- How do I train my new employees? Do I utilize outside safety consultants? Do I have a formal orientation process?

- Can I easily identify every customer who does not have a safety inspection on file?

- Can I identify if I have expired regulators – or DOT cylinders that need to be requalified?

- Am I compliant with NFPA 58 cathodic protection requirements?

- Do I require an initial duty-to-warn process to be completed for all new customers?

- Do I have electronic storage and retrieval of important safety and compliance documentation for my customers?

After you have completed this self-assessment exercise, you will have a better understanding of your current safety program, its strengths and areas in need of improvement. Take the steps necessary to utilize available technology to organize your safety documentation and compliance data more efficiently. Putting safety first is the right thing to do. By doing so, you will protect your customers, employees and your company. **LPG**

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