



By Tim Quinn

P3 – Cutting-Edge Risk Management Technology for the Propane Industry

“Information technology and business are becoming inextricably interwoven. I don’t think anybody can talk meaningfully about one without the talking about the other.”

Bill Gates

Propane marketers always identify safety as their highest priority. Actions, however, are not always consistent with words. Many propane marketers rely on outdated processes for the retrieval of important safety and risk management information.

John Hansen, a principal at Schlee, Huber, McMullen & Krause PC and a propane industry legal expert, stresses the importance of propane safety.

“Propane marketers must have organized and accessible files that can be effectively used by management to enhance the safety of all employees and customers.”

Propane managers, through no fault of

their own, often lack the information needed to maximize the safety of their customers and employees.

A few short questions may help you determine if your company falls into that category.

- Does your company simply file inspection and safety records and allow them to gather dust?
- Does your company have a systematic and accurate way to follow up on inspections and service records?
- Does your company employ a system using proactive alerts when regulators need to be replaced, CSST upgrades are needed, or similar work needs to be done?
- Can your company identify all warnings provided to its consumers?

P3 is a web based computer software that allows propane marketers to document, store, and retrieve a variety of service and safety information effectively and efficiently.

The P3 program helps to ensure that you have proper documentation on file and that you know when follow-up is needed. The P3 program minimizes the need for hard copies of documents, yet organizes the information from documents produced in the field so that the information can be used effectively to enhance customer and employee safety.

The P3 program was designed for ease of use with input from various propane industry leaders including safety, risk management, and legal experts and incorporates the best safety practices in the propane industry.

Consider how the P3 program might have changed the outcome in the following lawsuit:

The propane marketer installs a new tank at a customer’s vacation home and claims to have done a leak test. The marketer’s employee fails to fill out the part of the inspection form relating to the leak test. One week later, the customer, his wife, and his granddaughter go to the home: the home explodes shortly after they arrive resulting in the death of the customer and his wife and the injury of the granddaughter. An investigation ensues and a question arises regarding the cause of the explosion. The marketer claims that the leak has to have arisen following the initial tank set and leak test. The plaintiffs claim that the leak test was never done and that the leak would have been discovered had it been performed. Consistent with a theme heard in many cases, plaintiffs argue that “if it’s not documented, it was never done.” Hundreds of thousands of dollars are spent defending the

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case. Dozens of depositions are taken, including numerous depositions of the marketer's employees. That results in stress, unproductive down time for the employees, and bad publicity. The case settles for a substantial but confidential amount in part because the leak test was not documented.

Had P3 been implemented, the system would have indicated that the customer's leak test was not on file and preemptive corrective action could have been undertaken. This, however, is just one example of the many ways that P3 enhances safety and could even prevent catastrophic accidents.

Many industry safety experts like Mike DiGiorgio, the President of Silverback Consulting Group and the former head of safety at Paraco, see the value in the P3 program. According to DiGiorgio, "P3 has developed a new web-based application for propane marketers that will revolutionize how important safety documentation is obtained, stored, and retrieved. Did you know that we have to comply with ANSI, ASTM, NACE, CFR, DOT, CETP, DOL, EPA, HAZA-OPER, ICC, NFPA, NPGA, PERC, PHMSA, SARA, and AHJ? It goes on and on. Not to mention the insurance providers and their requirements."

"The P3 data that propane marketers enter into the system can produce valuable compliance-related legal reports," DiGiorgio also noted. "In the legal world, it's all about compliance,

safety, and accountability; P3 helps you achieve these objectives thoroughly and effectively."

Assess Your Process and Technology

Assess the business processes your company employs with respect to the documentation, storage, and retrieval of field safety information. Can this data be assimilated into meaningful and useful management reports? Can proactive alerts be set for tank expirations, cathodic protection inspections, and other critical safety functions? Does your company's process truly make safety the highest priority?

If the answer to that last question is "no," consider taking time out for a free demonstration of P3. P3 is not just a better process for documenting, storing, and retrieving safety information – it's good business. Marketers using P3 can prove compliance with best safety practices which can lower insurance premiums and attract potential purchasers. Forms provided as part of the P3 program have been developed by industry safety experts. P3 is the information system that provides e-storage and retrieval. Most significantly, P3 is the definitive safety and risk mitigation technology designed specifically for propane marketers. Make safety your highest priority and improve your peace of mind by adopting the P3 program today. ■ TQ

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