

# Socially Distant, NFPA 58 Compliant: Cathodic Testing in 2020

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Does your propane company service any underground tanks? Most marketers do, which means most of us are required to complete cathodic protection inspections of these underground tanks. Make sure your propane business has a safe cathodic testing process in place so that you can continue to maintain compliance, keep your employees safe with proper social distancing, and improve overall operational efficiencies while you're at it.



## NFPA 58 CATHODIC TESTING REQUIREMENTS

Based on the 2011 edition of the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) 58 Liquefied Petroleum Gas Code, cathodic protection inspections are required for underground propane tanks. It is critical to perform the required cathodic testing for all of your underground propane tanks in order to stay compliant, avoid fines, and keep your customers safe. In order to maintain operational efficiencies and make sure your team is executing and documenting cathodic tests properly, it's a good idea to set up a system that combines mobile technology, hands-on training, and electronic safety documentation storage.

## SETTING UP A SYSTEM THAT WORKS

### Step 1: Get your forms in order.

Go through your customer base and make sure you have documentation for initial testing records and inspection forms. If these are still paper documents, switching to an electronic safety documentation system with mobile cathodic inspections can make the entire process seamless and efficient.

### Step 2: Set techs up with mobile inspection technology.

Mobile cathodic protection inspection forms are changing the game for technicians in the field. Instead of filling out

paper forms, they can complete the inspection on a tablet, filling in electronic form fields that use advanced technology to eliminate errors and/or incorrect information entry. Mobile inspection forms that are automatically uploaded into an electronic safety documentation database will be available for your office and management personnel to review right away.

### Step 3: Use electronic safety documentation to review inspections immediately.

A safety documentation software that can electronically store your initial testing records and inspection forms will transform the way your team manages its compliance data. Office and management personnel can review mobile cathodic testing inspections in real time and give techs in the field immediate feedback.

### Step 4: Establish a follow-up testing tracking process.

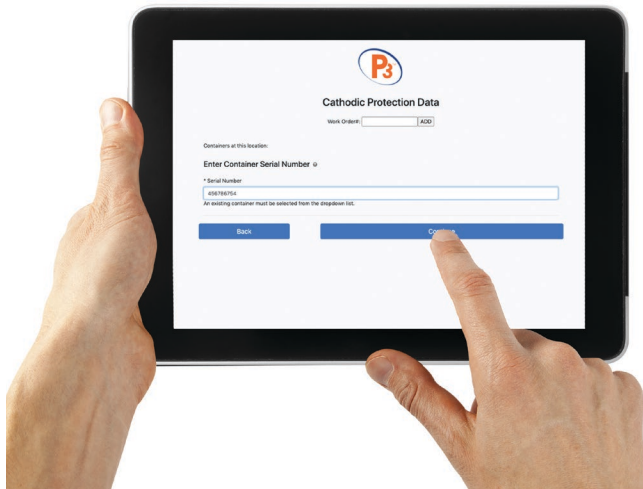
Because NFPA 58 requires routine testing, setting up an efficient documentation and tracking process is essential to help your company keep up with required follow-ups. When you use technology to manage your cathodic testing documentation, you can audit your data with management reports and generate automatic alerts for when follow-ups are due.

### Step 5: Evaluate employee performance and assess training.

This is a step that should be an ongoing part of your safety program. It is critical that your employees are trained on proper cathodic testing methods and that they are trained appropriately if you decide to transition from paper to mobile inspection forms. Testing requirements per NFPA 58 include:

- Cathodic protection must be at least  $-0.85$  D.C. or more (meaning negative) using a copper-copper sulfate half cell.
- Test must be completed upon installation unless prohibited by climatic conditions, in which case testing shall be done within 180 days after installation of the system.
- For continued verification of the effectiveness of the system, 12 to 18 months after the initial test.

- Periodic follow-up testing shall be performed at intervals not to exceed 36 months.
- Systems failing a test shall be repaired as soon as practical unless climatic conditions prohibit this action, in which case the repair shall be made not more than 180 days thereafter. Testing schedule shall be restarted as required initially.
- Documentation of the results of the two most recent tests shall be retained.



## INCREASING EFFICIENCIES & STAYING SAFE DURING A PANDEMIC

It feels like there hasn't been much good news in 2020, but there is a bright side to cathodic protection inspections this year. Cathodic inspections are a service that can be marketed to qualifying propane customers as a safety requirement and something that can easily be done outside with proper social distancing guidelines. Plus, when you use mobile inspection technology and electronic safety documentation software, you are able to limit employee contact to protect them even further.

P3 Propane Safety is helping hundreds of propane marketers across the country navigate safety requirements in a pandemic environment. Visit [P3PropaneSafety.com](https://P3PropaneSafety.com) to learn more about cathodic protection inspections, mobile technology, and other ways we can help your company stay safe and compliant during these unprecedented times.

*Eric H. Leskinen, executive vice president of P3 Propane Safety, has more than 30 years of experience with career progression from field operations to corporate direction. He has designed, managed, and executed safety training and compliance programs for multistate companies with up to 1100 employees.*