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Photo Documentation's Role in Propane Safety

If you've been working in the propane industry for any length of time, you've likely heard the phrase "if it wasn't documented, it didn't happen." We, as an industry, know how important documentation is—but finding an organized and accurate way to track and store information can be a hurdle for many managers and owners. New advancements in digital forms and online documentation software take stress off of your plate. Cloud storage has become the industry standard, and photo documentation is a tool that more and more marketers are implementing to reduce risk, increase efficiencies, and comply with code requirements.

How Photos Protect Your Propane Company

Photos are a helpful tool when it comes to protecting your propane company from liability. We're willing to bet you've driven by one of your previously code-compliant container sets only to see that a homeowner or contractor modification, such as an air conditioner or generator installation, has now caused a source of ignition distance violation.

Time-stamped images can prove that your container set was in compliance when you installed it. If you're not using photo documentation and a claim is made, it will be your word against the homeowner's—and that is never a good place to be. Taking a photo of every container set or safety inspection you do provides direct visual proof that the container set your company installed or serviced is compliant with NFPA 58 container requirements.

Evaluate & Improve Technician Performance

Clearly, photo documentation is a seamless way to track compliance and reduce risk at your company—but don't overlook additional benefits! Photos are also a great tool to help your management team evaluate technician performance and provide real-time coaching and training.

Giving feedback to your team in real time changes technician behavior for the better. When a mistake is corrected immediately by a supportive manager, the technician will internalize the feedback and avoid making the mistake in the future.

In addition, photos stored on the cloud are instantly

accessible to back-office staff, managers and owners, making technician performance evaluation simpler than ever.

Improve Container-Issue Reporting

Being aware of container-citing requirements for ASME aboveground and underground containers and DOT cylinders is critical. How does your company report container-related issues to the office for remediation? Many current standards, such as writing on the back of the delivery ticket or calling the office, unfortunately can allow important follow-ups to slip through the cracks.

Instead, use photo documentation to your advantage. When your delivery drivers and technicians are out in the field, instruct them to use photographs to document and report container-related issues. Be sure to have a process for organizing those photos when they come in; pictures organized in a dashboard enhance your process for documenting situations needing follow-up. If anything looks wrong, you can identify the problem right away and schedule a remediation rather than waiting weeks or months for a different technician to inspect the property and notice the error.



Note: Taking a quick photo of a noncompliant container is much easier than filling out a report after the fact. Photo documentation increases the chance that your team will report the issue rather than letting it slide.

A Snapshot of the Main Point

Having clear photo documentation that your propane storage containers are compliant with NFPA 58 and other requirements will help protect your company from liability in the event of litigation. The process will help you identify and employ training opportunities for your team in real time along with improving your method for reporting container placement issues. Finally, a photo documentation process will help avoid unnecessary safety hazards to better protect your customers, employees, and company in the long run. ICM

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