

Why Paper Inspections Are Quietly Putting Propane Marketers at Risk



How mobile documentation paired with strong field training closes the gap.

by **Brian Peters**, Regional Vice President, *P3 Propane Safety*

Ask any service manager what keeps them up at night, and incomplete documentation will land near the top of the list. A single safety inspection form can carry 50 or more fields, and on a busy route, a technician may complete several in a day. By the time those forms make it back to the office, they're filed away, partially keyed into the back-office system, and rarely reviewed in detail unless something goes wrong. And that's where the trouble can start.

A 30% Error Rate Is a Liability Problem

The industry has long faced documentation error rates as high as 30% on paper and PDF inspection forms. That means nearly one in three records may have missing fields, illegible entries, or incomplete operating test data. In the event of an incident, that paperwork is supposed to be the company's first line of defense. When it falls short, it quickly becomes a liability.

The root causes are typically rushed handwriting, skipped fields, forms that get damaged in the truck, and office staff trying to interpret entries written hours earlier by someone who's already on the next job. Even diligent technicians make mistakes when the process relies on memory and manual entry.

How Mobile Documentation Changes the Equation

Mobile safety inspections remove most of the common failure points. Smart forms guide technicians through each section with required fields, dropdown answers, and real-time validation. If a leak check value falls outside NFPA 58 parameters, the technician sees the flag immediately.

The benefits of a mobile compliance system compound across the operation:

- **For technicians:** Clearer prompts, fewer write-in fields, and automatic delivery of a copy to the customer and the company database.
- **For service managers:** Real-time visibility into completed inspections and the ability to coach in the moment.
- **For the company:** A defensible, searchable record that holds up when it matters most.

In addition to saving managers from having to hunt through files or chase down a tech for clarification, a comprehensive mobile documentation system identifies larger patterns. If multiple technicians are consistently missing the same field or misinterpreting the same test, you are being presented with a training opportunity to address the issue before it shows up in an incident report.

Technology Works Best When Training Backs It Up

No software replaces fundamentals. A technician who doesn't fully understand why a leak check matters won't perform a better one just because the form is digital. That's why P3 Propane Safety continues to invest in hands-on field training alongside our industry-leading mobile documentation system.

This September, P3 Propane Safety's Director of Safety and Compliance, Brent Cammett, will lead an on-site **Fundamentals of Propane Training** session hosted by **ESEA**. The course runs **Monday, September 22, and Tuesday, September 23, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at 1 McCrea Hill Road, Ballston Spa, NY 12020**. It's a strong opportunity for new and seasoned technicians to reinforce the core safety practices that smart documentation is built to capture.

The Bottom Line: Mobile Documentation Works

Paper inspections aren't just inefficient. They're a measurable risk. Moving to mobile documentation reduces errors, strengthens defensibility, and gives managers the tools to coach in real time. Combined with consistent field training, it's one of the highest-impact steps a propane marketer can take to protect employees, customers, and the business itself.

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