

SAFETY FIRST



A BI-MONTHLY JOURNAL FOR PROPANE SAFETY

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*in this issue.....*the big switch

something to think about

A man begins cutting his wisdom teeth the first time he bites off more than he can chew.

Herb Caen

Each one of us has attempted to do a job or complete a task without the proper tools, experience or training. Often we're lucky. Despite our greenhorn experience or improper tools things turned out alright, maybe not perfect, but alright. Maybe the miter cut was not perfect on a wood working project, but it was close enough. When it comes to safety sensitive propane task, close enough doesn't count. Think it through before you do. If you don't know or don't have the right tool; ASK.

It is a common fact that year after year 60 to 70% of the average residential retail propane demand will occur between December 1 and March 15th. That's like starting the Indy Car Racing Season in a 35 MPH Model T in April and finishing next March in a 240 MPH Dallara.

Track conditions change a lot over the course of a race. Each racing venue is similar but different from the last. Racing teams must make operational and safety changes as the season and even the individual race continues. The same thing is true with propane deliveries and drivers.

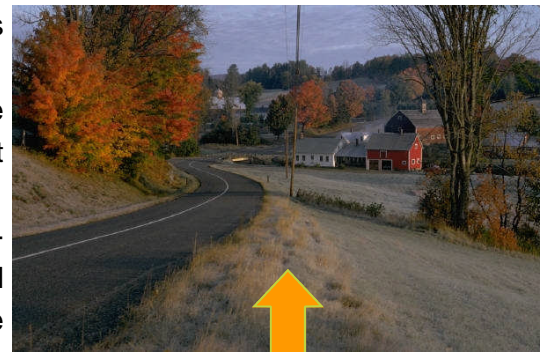
Weather and road conditions change with the seasons. And then they start changing from day to day.

Actually, for some retail propane dealers with service in multiple counties, road conditions can vary from one side of the coverage area to the next.

Every propane dealer in the Midwest knows that weather conditions can change by the hour.

The switch from autumn to winter is huge. The switch from busy to wide-open busy is huge. But perhaps the biggest switch requirement of all is in the attitude and character of the professional drivers and service technicians that must face all of the aforementioned elements and conditions to keep the blue flame lit in thousands of homes and businesses.

A typical 15 minute pre trip inspection during spring, summer or fall weather can become a hurried 5-minute inspection when temperatures drop to 0 to 20 degrees.



A hurried entrance to the warm cab of a bobtail on a cold winter day can result in a missed step or a slip that can cause a nasty fall onto hard frozen ground.

The increase in will-call deliveries just a few days before the holidays can create a harried and frenzied delivery schedule with longer hours behind the wheel and pulling hoses through the snow.

And then there is the hazard of extended hours of darkness in the mornings and evenings. Mix that with deteriorating road conditions and the recipe for an incident involving propane increases substantially.

Winter is not the time to short sell inspections, safe driving skills and the importance of a PROFESSIONAL attitude.

PROFES\$IONAL

Some of the descriptions given in the dictionary for the word professional include: (a) having or showing great skill; (b) a skilled practitioner (c) A person following a profession, especially a learned profession.

None of these descriptions have any sort of seasonal attachment to the skills or application of the profession.

Professional drivers and service technicians deserve understanding and support from the entire propane marketer team during the big switch and rush to deliver the lion's share of the annual propane sales in only a handful of months. A famous advisor to the largest and most successful retail companies in America said many years ago: 'management exists for one reason only; to support the employees who are servicing the customer'.

Crucial SAFETY SENSITIVE tasks such as hose, piping and fitting inspections are extremely critical during cold winter months. Seals on pumps, meters, strainers and emergency shutdown devices are more prone to leaks in cold weather than warm. And sometimes the rush of the busy season can cause a small leak to be overlooked until "we're caught up".

With new USDOT rules on cell phone use by the drivers of commercial motor vehicles going into force as the **big switch** begins it will be extremely important for management and drivers to familiarize themselves with the rules and implement a strict policy of compliance. The fines will be significant. REMEMBER; this is a hot button issue with USDOT and officers will be watching for violators. Indications are that drivers of propane delivery vehicles can only receive emergency service or delivery messages. You can almost assuredly count on a full scale roadside inspection if a driver gives a DOT officer probable cause to pull the driver over for talking on the telephone. CHECK IT OUT and share the new rules with your drivers. Here's a link to follow: <http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/about/news/news-releases/2011/Secretary-LaHood-Announces-Step-towards-Safer-Highways.aspx>.

Many are the propane delivery drivers who have logged winter after winter without incident. They are truly the PRO's in propane delivery. Thanks for your example to the industry.



you get what you inspect, not what you expect!

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