



# PROPANE CONSUMER EDUCATION PROGRAM

## *Why is propane education important?*

If involved in a lawsuit, a company is in a better defensive position by having a well-developed, consistent, and documented consumer education program. The objective of a consumer education program is to educate consumers about propane safety to prevent accidents, as well as to respond to propane emergencies. In order to provide a defense of your good faith efforts to educate customers, it is vital to document all of your actions.

Some states have specific consumer education language that needs to be communicated to propane consumers, including New Mexico, Texas and Wisconsin, to name a few. Outside of some of these state specific requirements, there are not many detailed standards for providing safety information to customers other than with respect to jurisdictional systems and in states that have limited liability laws. Unfortunately, there is not an exact formula as to what a consumer education program must entail. Therefore, it is important is that you have a program to provide propane safety information for your propane customers, as well as a system in place to verify when and what information you have communicated with the customer. The information in this guide is intended to help you in evaluating, developing, and revising, if necessary, your current consumer education program.

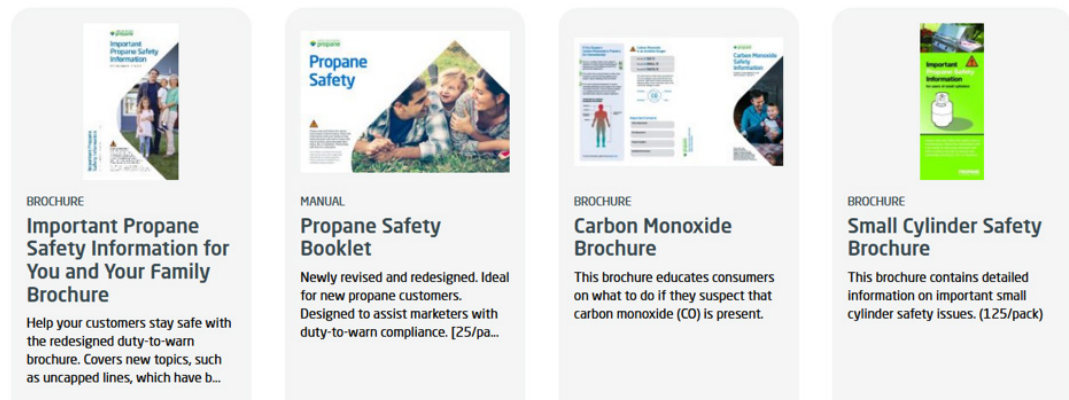
The information in this guide is to assist you in developing your own consumer education program for your company. It is important is that you have a program to provide propane safety information to your propane customers, as well as a system in place to verify when and what information you have communicated with the customer.

## Propane Consumer Education Program

### Risk Engineering

#### Propane Educational Resources

In an effort to help propane dealers provide an up-to-date consumer education program, the **Propane Education and Research Council** (PERC) has many consumer education resources available. You may find these consumer education resources on the Propane Education and Research Council's website at <https://propane.com/>. Many of these resources and other state specific materials may be obtained through your state associations, so it best to check with them as well.



Some of the consumer education brochures are available in both English and Spanish. Below are just a few of the brochures that can be used to provide valuable safety information to your customers.

- Important Propane Safety Information for You and Your Family
- Important Propane Safety Information for Users of Small Cylinders
- Carbon Monoxide
- Above-ground Propane Container Ownership: Know Your Responsibilities
- Underground Propane Tank Ownership: Know Your Responsibilities
- Essential Propane Safety Information for High Snowfall Areas.
- Propane and Weather Safety (Winter Storms, Wildfires, Hurricanes, Hurricanes, Tornadoes, Floods)
- Propane and Your Recreational Vehicle (RV)

#### Who Should Receive Consumer Education

The following is recommended guidance for who should receive consumer education information, how to communicate that information, and how to document the process.

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### New Customers

The best option is to meet with a new customer in person to explain your services and propane safety reminders. Unfortunately, this may not always happen, but think about how to communicate and document safety information to all new customers. Here are a few items to communicate:

- Where and how to shut the gas off.
- Odorant: If at all possible have the customer sniff propane at the tank to determine if that customer can smell propane and recognize its odor. If an odorant test cannot be performed ensure the customer receives a safety brochure with a scratch and sniff sample.
- What to do if they run out of gas.
- What to do if they smell gas.
- How to read the tank gauge.
- Propane Gas Detectors – Suggest that customers purchase gas detectors as an additional means of leak detection.
- Carbon Monoxide “CO” Safety

### Existing Customers

In most states there is no specific requirement as to how often and what safety materials are to be communicated. In general, many companies will incorporate an annual mailing to consumers with safety information.

- Consider providing different safety materials to customers with topics specific to their environment which might include wildfire, hurricanes, heavy snow, customer-owned tanks, whether aboveground or below ground, etc.
- Outside of physically providing or mailing information to consumers, consider incorporating safety information in the form of newsletters, website, back of bulk delivery tickets, work orders, and invoices. The goal is to provide multiple means of disseminating safety information. PERC has developed safety messages for propane retailers to use on delivery tickets, invoices, or work orders.

### Documentation

- Whenever possible, obtain a customer signature, such as during new customer set-ups or when completing Gas/Safety Checks.
  - A signature is very important for verification of receipt of safety warning information.
- Have customers sign for the safety information when they sign a lease.
  - Some companies incorporate safety information language within their lease agreements.
  - If your company changes the names of the brochures it disseminates, it should track and keep records of the different versions of the brochure.
- Mailing Guidelines
  - Keep a list of customers and a copy of each safety information sent.
  - Consider use of a third-party vendor to send out safety information to your customers.
  - Get a receipt from the post office, if sending by bulk mail.
  - Include your company in the mailing; do not open the envelope, leave the postmark intact and keep it to be used as evidence of mailing in the event of a claim or lawsuit.
- Safety information hand delivered while making propane deliveries or service calls.
  - Have your drivers/service personnel document on the delivery ticket or service order the name of the safety brochure left or item number from the PERC brochure to identify what safety information was provided.

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## Risk Engineering

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### *Conclusion*

In the event of a lawsuit involving a propane fire or explosion, consumer education will be brought up by plaintiff's attorneys. They will want to know what safety information was provided to the Plaintiff, when it was provided and how it was communicated. Not only is it good to continue educating the customer on safety guidance to prevent accidents, it is important to protect your company should an unfortunate propane event occur. Documentation is very important and making sure all employees understand the consumer education process will help verify your company is being proactive to help protect the consumer. Finally, make sure that you have read your propane safety information and have had all of your employees do so as part of your regular safety and training program.

This material was developed as a general guide to safety from sources believed to be reliable and is not intended to provide legal, technical or other professional advice. These materials are not intended to replace any training or education that users may wish or need to provide to their personnel. Crum & Forster does not endorse any of the vendors listed in this publication, nor does it endorse the information, products or services that they offer or provide. Compliance with all Federal, State or local laws and regulations remain the policyholder's responsibility.

