

**Safety  
Talk**

# Propane Industry Safety Talks

## Customer Care & Service





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This document includes *Safety Talks* relevant to *Customer Care & Service*. A comprehensive set of all 45 *Safety Talks* is also available.

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# Safety Talk

## Selecting Safe Delivery Routes and Protecting Property

As a propane delivery driver, you are responsible for protecting people and property in the course of your job. The following tips can supplement your company's safety plan and help you prevent any unnecessary issues.

### PLANNING AND SETTING OFF ON YOUR ROUTE:

- ✓ **Plan for the issues of delivery vehicles** — Know the height and weight of your vehicle and any bridges or road sections that require extra safety measures.
- ✓ **Drive with caution and vigilance** — Follow all recommended instructions at railroad crossings and drawbridges and posted hazmat route signs, and be prepared for any detours due to local restrictions.
- ✓ **Adjust for weather** — Maintain speed appropriate for conditions. Plan ahead if you need to change your route for easier travel, and make customer appointments accordingly.

*Vehicle flashers must be used at all railroad crossings and any time the vehicle is stopped except for routine traffic stops.*

### PROTECTING CUSTOMER LANDSCAPING, PROPERTY, AND STRUCTURES:

You will encounter a variety of issues and obstacles in day-to-day deliveries and service. Understand the size and restrictions of your vehicle, and always exercise good judgment.

- ✓ Keep your vehicle on roadways, driveways, or surfaces adequate to support its weight.
- ✓ **Avoid attempting travel over small private bridges or culverts** — Park your vehicle and use a dolly to transport cylinders to the delivery location. If you're driving a bobtail, use the full length of the delivery hose to reach across the bridge to the LP-gas containers. Be aware of landscaping/decorative items that the hose may damage when pulling it to the container.
- ✓ Close all gates after driving through to prevent loss of pets or livestock. Park in a location that allows room for other vehicles to come and go freely.
- ✓ Stay alert to the activities and movement of children and pets.
- ✓ Upon job completion, conduct a vehicle walk-around to ensure your exit path is clear. Know the locations of telephone poles and utility boxes to confirm you can clear them.

### Discussion Topics

1. The customer tells you other propane drivers have crossed his bridge without issue, but as you approach, you feel it might not be secure. What is your best course of action?
2. As you are exiting, you collide with an old birdhouse the customer has at her site. How do you proceed?

### LEARNING ACTIVITY

*Discuss a recent incident in a propane delivery or gas-related event. Discuss what was handled properly and what should have received more attention. Ask participants for input and suggestions.*

Source: *Propane Delivery Operations and Cylinder Delivery* [PERC]

For more information on selecting safe delivery routes, visit [propanesafety.com](http://propanesafety.com).



# Safety Talk

## Handling Out-of-Gas Situations

Propane delivery personnel will handle out-of-gas situations on occasion. These “interruptions of service” merit quick response, since they may indicate leaks or other hazards. It is important that you understand potential causes so you can remedy problems quickly. Always follow your company’s policies and procedures. The following additional tips will help safeguard you and your customers.

### WHEN A SITUATION IS CALLED IN BY A CUSTOMER:

Various out-of-gas situations are reported by customers and forwarded to propane delivery personnel. When talking with the homeowner before you arrive:

- Tell him/her to close all appliance valves and the valve at the tank or the main shutoff valve located in the fuel line.
- Make arrangements for the customer to be home for a leak check and return to service.

### WHEN A SITUATION IS DETECTED DURING A ROUTINE SERVICE CALL:

- Personally inspect to make sure the tank or cylinder and all appliance valves are closed.
- Charge the container to operating pressure or replace the cylinder.
- Check the container and connections for leaks with an approved leak detector solution.
- Perform a leak check per your company’s operating procedures.
- Fill the container.
- Put the system back in service, if it is safe to do so.

### WHEN RESPONDING TO A SITUATION WHERE THE CUSTOMER IS NOT PRESENT:

It’s possible that no one will be home when you discover an out-of-gas situation. If you cannot gain access to appliances to perform a leak check, follow these safety steps:

- Close the container service valve.
- Charge the container to operating pressure or replace the cylinder.
- Check the container for leaks with an approved leak detector solution.
- Fill the container. Securely fasten a warning tag to the container service valve that includes the appropriate notice.
- Leave a notice at the door that explains that the gas is turned off and that the customer needs to call to restore service.

*Regardless of how an out-of-gas situation is discovered, NFPA 54 requires that the propane marketer notify all affected users any time the gas supply is turned off and that a leak check be performed before placing the system back in service.*

### MINIMIZING OUT-OF-GAS CALLS:

You can help minimize out-of-gas calls by:

- Monitoring customers’ propane needs.
- Anticipating changing requirements, such as higher propane usage due to weather or home improvements.
- Promoting customer awareness of propane storage levels.
- Promoting company services such as “keep full service,” budget billing programs, and electronic liquid level monitors.

Source: *Propane Delivery Operations and Cylinder Delivery* [PERC]

For more information on handling out-of-gas situations, visit [propanesafety.com](http://propanesafety.com).

### Discussion Topics

1. A customer continuously has an out-of-gas situation. What could be the issue?
2. A homeowner is upset about having a service technician perform a leak test and having to pay to re-establish service. Discuss how to address his concerns in light of safety issues and company policy.

### LEARNING ACTIVITY

*Stage a situation where a “customer” calls in an out-of-gas report. Prepare scripts on different issues and have participants talk through the situation with the customer. Discuss ways to handle each scenario.*



# Safety Talk

## Complete Combustion and Carbon Monoxide

The efficient combustion of propane requires a ratio of 1 part propane to 24 parts air. If this ratio is off or equipment is not working properly, propane may not combust completely. Incomplete combustion can be dangerous. It is your job to understand how to detect incomplete combustion and respond swiftly.

### SIGNS OF INCOMPLETE PROPANE COMBUSTION:

- ✓ **Excessive water vapor** — Can be harmful to appliances' venting systems.
- ✓ **Soot** — Potentially damaging to property.
- ✓ **Aldehydes** — Toxic gas detectable by a sharp, penetrating odor, a metallic mouth taste, or a burning sensation in the nose and eyes.

If any of these are present, follow your company's guidelines for action.

*Incomplete combustion may also result in the release of **carbon monoxide**.*

**Some propane companies handle carbon monoxide detection, while others refer calls to the fire department. If your company does address these issues, use the following guidelines:**

### WHEN TO CHECK FOR CARBON MONOXIDE AT CUSTOMER LOCATIONS:

Carbon monoxide (CO) can be deadly. However, because CO is odorless and colorless, it can be difficult to detect. Check for CO if any of the following conditions exist:

- ✓ A customer complains of chronic headaches or nausea.
- ✓ Houseplants are dying.
- ✓ There is a chronic odor and the source or cause cannot be located.
- ✓ Excessive water vapor forms on cool surfaces in the house.
- ✓ The odor of aldehydes is present.

### USING PORTABLE CO DETECTORS:

If your company provides portable CO detectors, it is important that you are trained in their use. Always follow manufacturer instructions. Keep in mind:

- ✓ Portable CO detectors should be at or close to room temperature before testing the air.
- ✓ Samples should not be taken if the air temperature is above 125°F. Thus, it may not always be possible to check flue gases directly without additional equipment.

### PLACES TO CHECK FOR CARBON MONOXIDE:

Always test different areas in the house or building to determine the highest CO level.

Tests for CO should occur:

- ✓ In the air at head height
- ✓ Near gas appliances
- ✓ Close to heating ducts
- ✓ Near appliance diverters and fire doors on appliances in basements or utility rooms

If an appliance is suspected as the source of CO, it may be turned off before your arrival. Take readings before it is restarted, 1–2 minutes after it is restarted, and 15 minutes after it has been on to ensure accurate CO detection.

Source: *Basic Principles and Practices of Propane* (PERC)

For more information about complete combustion and carbon monoxide, visit [propanesafety.com](http://propanesafety.com).

### Discussion Topics

1. While servicing a dryer, you notice soot around the dryer vent. How do you respond?
2. Your customer asks about carbon monoxide and ways he can protect his family. What safeguards do you recommend?

### LEARNING ACTIVITY

*Have participants stage a mock CO check at their building. Discuss where and how to test, and actions necessary if CO is detected.*



# Safety Talk

## Odor Complaints, Gas Leaks, and Service Interruptions

A customer complaint about a gas odor requires prompt attention. A propane leak can exist for a long time without detection. To ensure against potential hazards or downtime, respond to propane odor reports swiftly, and follow your company policy for resolution.

### FIELDING ODOR REPORTS:

- ✓ Use your company's policies and procedures when taking a customer odor/gas leak call. This will help you gather the information you need to determine the source and location of a possible leak, and help you give appropriate instructions to the customer.
- ✓ If the propane odor is detected *inside* a building, instruct the customer to immediately put out all smoking materials and other open flames; do not operate lights, appliances, telephones, or cell phones; shut off the gas if it is safe to do so; and leave the area.

### AT THE CUSTOMER SITE:

The odor of propane suggests its presence, but cannot signify its concentration. Since you have no way of knowing the potential risk, always follow these precautions:

- ✓ Treat all leak reports as propane gas, until proven otherwise.
- ✓ Keep the area clear of open flames and electric sparks; do not turn on electrical switches, cell phones, or flashlights in the area.
- ✓ Use NFPA 54's three-minute leak test ([www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org)), or your company's preferred leak-detection methods. Be aware of any other state and local guidelines that apply, and follow them accordingly.
- ✓ Once you have determined the source and extent of the leak, follow your company's policy and procedures for ways to remedy.

### SERVICE INTERRUPTIONS AND REGULATIONS:

Propane delivery interruptions may occur when:

- ✓ Cylinders or containers undergo maintenance or when they are exchanged or repaired.
- ✓ Any changes are made to the gas distribution lines.
- ✓ There is a gas leak.
- ✓ There is an equipment failure or issue with customer payment.

Know the reasons and causes of a service interruption and respond appropriately. It is your job to respond promptly to a service interruption due to an appliance malfunction, a safety shutoff, or a pilot light shutoff.

### Discussion Topics

1. Your customer has just had a propane delivery and calls to report an odd smell. How do you respond? What are the key questions asked and information gathered?
2. A customer, who has been dispatched to a number of times, once again complains of a propane odor in his kitchen. How do you respond?

### LEARNING ACTIVITY

*Simulate an odor complaint call. Have participants take the call and follow your company's policies and procedures. Discuss circumstances where immediate action may be required, and the appropriate steps.*

Source: *Basic Principles and Practices of Propane* (PERC)

For more information about odor complaints, visit [propanesafety.com](http://propanesafety.com).



# Safety Talk

## Providing Quality Customer Service

Propane customers have different applications, requirements, and knowledge. Make it a point to understand their needs and provide helpful answers and accurate information. Positive, professional interactions are key to keeping the customers you have and developing new ones. More important, quality, trustworthy customer service is critical in promoting the safe use of propane.

### TIPS FOR EVERY CUSTOMER ENCOUNTER:

- ✓ **Be on time** — Be diligent about scheduling. Allow enough time to account for necessary work and travel between appointments. Call if you run late. It's better to schedule a job for the next day than to schedule an appointment that cannot be kept.
- ✓ **Check work orders** — Before heading to a job, check order information, such as account number, address, customer name, and a description of the work to be done. This ensures you are informed about their particular situation and ready to handle it when you arrive.
- ✓ **Develop a good relationship** — Treat your customers as you would like to be treated. Wipe your shoes before entering a customer's home, be prepared to take care of the task at hand, and show your concern about their issue — regardless of the size of the job.
- ✓ **Demonstrate integrity** — Never promise a customer something that can't be done. Verify that requested services make sense for your company to handle.
- ✓ **Build trust** — Do the job right the first time. If a mistake is made, don't be afraid to admit it. Address the issue and handle it quickly.
- ✓ **Manage angry customers the right way** — Occasionally, you may deal with an angry customer. Remain calm. Be as informative as possible, and don't take hurtful words personally. Apologize for the inconvenience and do whatever is within company policy to satisfy the customer. When your work is done, ask the customer to inspect the work area to ensure they are satisfied.

### THREE ESSENTIALS OF PROFESSIONALISM:

- ✓ **Personal appearance** — Customers will make a judgment on your trustworthiness by your personal appearance. Always be neat and well-groomed, with your hair trimmed and out of your face. Keep your uniform clean and mended.
- ✓ **Equipment care and maintenance** — Even if they don't know how each tool is used, customers notice its condition. Make sure all equipment is cleaned, serviced, and repaired regularly.
- ✓ **Vehicle operation** — For both appearance and safety, clean and service your vehicle regularly. Safe and courteous driving habits are a must.

### TIPS FOR ONGOING INTERACTIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS:

Oftentimes, customers may need follow-up support or information. This is especially true after an installation or a repair. It is important to remain patient and courteous at all times, and clearly answer any concerns the customer may have.

- ✓ Know your company policies and procedures for documenting safety-related contacts with the customer. Be sure to note the question or concern along with your response. If your company does not have a special form for this purpose, use a service work order or delivery ticket.
- ✓ If you cannot answer a customer's question accurately or completely, refer him/her to someone who can. Start with internal staff, but don't be afraid to refer to appliance service companies if you cannot handle the issue in-house.

### Discussion Topics

1. Consider the following scenario: You are stuck on one job site and have an appointment at another in less than 30 minutes. What are your options?
2. What is the best way to handle follow-up situations when the work is clearly not a good fit for your business or personnel?

### LEARNING ACTIVITY

*Stage a situation with an angry customer. Have participants take turns at being the customer and the company representative. Discuss how the issue could be best handled.*

Source: *Basic Principles and Practices of Propane* (PERC)

For more information regarding customer service, visit [propanesafety.com](http://propanesafety.com).



# Safety Talk

## Mobile Crane Safety: Site Assessment

Proper site planning and preparation are extremely important to ensure a safe and trouble-free lift. An assessment must be conducted before you bring any vehicle or equipment on the job site.

### ALTHOUGH EVERY SITE IS DIFFERENT, THERE ARE SEVERAL FACTORS AND CONDITIONS YOU ALWAYS NEED TO CONSIDER BEFORE BRINGING THE CRANE ON-SITE:

- ✓ Determine the load weight and make sure it does not overload the crane. Refer to the crane's load chart to make certain that the lift will be performed within the rated capacity of the crane.
- ✓ Check the access routes to and from the work zone to ensure the crane can safely enter and exit.
- ✓ Choose a safe route that has the least impact on the property owner's landscape. Try to avoid or limit ruts and damage to grass, plants, trees, and fences.
- ✓ Carefully examine ground conditions to verify the ground's ability to support the weight of the crane and the load. Snow, mud, sand, and soft soil conditions should be noted and accounted for.
- ✓ Locate all underground utilities and structures. The weight of the vehicle and its outriggers can puncture or collapse underground pipes, utility lines and outlets, septic tanks and septic drain fields, cisterns and water wells, and underground electric dog fences. Always ask the property owner to identify the location of all underground utilities and structures.
- ✓ The area should be fairly level. Consult your owner's manual to determine the amount of slope that your crane can tolerate. As a general rule, side slopes, shoring locations, excavations, and trenches should be avoided.
- ✓ Check for power lines and other overhead objects. Remember, tree branches and other obstructions can hide power lines.
- ✓ Determine the radius requirements of the lift. Be sure that these requirements will not cause you to enter an electrical danger zone.

### Discussion Topics

1. Even if you have been to the job site in the past, do you still need to conduct a thorough site assessment before conducting a new lift? Why or why not?
2. What can happen to your crane if you set up on soft or unstable ground?
3. Why is it important to know the location of every underground utility and structure at the job site?

### LEARNING ACTIVITY

*Act out a site assessment on your facility premises or a nearby location. Have all participants take part, and discuss special issues that might arise during different seasons.*

Source: *Mobile Crane Safety in the Propane Industry* [PERC]

For more information regarding mobile crane site assessment, visit [propanesafety.com](http://propanesafety.com).