BUTANE-PROPANE NEWS

BPN

MAY | 2020



PROPANE INDUSTRY RESPONDS TO COVID-19



A message from the Cavagna family

During this global pandemic, the Cavagna Group of companies has been active to protect the health of its people, which is the top priority for the company as well as to enhance the production of its medical devices and to guarantee continuity of the energy supply chain, which is an essential service.

Despite the many challenges businesses are facing, we've been successful in increasing production of our oxygen valves and regulators.

Once this crisis has passed, we will again use this space to promote new and innovative products for LPG, compressed gas and medical gas markets.

Until then, please continue to practice good social distancing, support your friends and neighbour, and connect with your family.

To everyone on the front line, working in hospitals and emergency services throughout the world, we offer you our humble thanks, your service to the community is amazing. Stay safe. We will all get through this together.

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PROPANE REMAINS ESSENTIAL

NATALIE PEAL

I would like to begin by thanking the members of the propane industry, who, with their hard work, dedication, and daily service, are making us proud. You are bringing comfort and consistency to customers in this time of uncertainty. You are helping to provide much needed services to the healthcare community. You are proving why propane is truly essential.

Another thank you goes to our incredible industry for its unique empathy, compassion, and heartfelt caring about our community and the global community. Along with that, I'd like to thank our advertisers and subscribers for their support. You give us the reason and the means to bring you the information you need during this unprecedented time.

The COVID-19 pandemic has provided another opportunity for the propane industry to demonstrate the value of its products and services. Declared an essential industry by agencies of the federal government and by state and local jurisdictions, the industry has remained in operation. Every day, employees are delivering fuel and appliances needed for heat and hot water, and, in turn, comfort, cleanliness, and safety.

Throughout this issue of ***BPN***, we cover many aspects of how the industry has carried on during the pandemic. You'll see how propane marketers have delivered fuel to pop-up medical facilities; how a propane marketer accustomed to challenging situations has adapted to this one; how the deep cuts in oil and gas production due to reduced demand may affect propane; how the many employees now working from home for the first time can "work at home happy"; how marketers can work with their insurance companies to try to get relief from the added financial burdens; how marketers can incorporate their response to the pandemic into their policies and procedures; how companies can add value in uncertain times; and how the industry can contribute to the move toward a resilient, decentralized world.

Because this is a changing situation, we encourage you to frequently check the websites of associations and government agencies. NPGA, PERC, and WLPGA have pages devoted to COVID-19. Government agencies like CDC, DOT, OSHA, and others provide updates too. ***BPN***'s website now features a page that includes links to relevant organizations, as well as news gathered by ***BPN*** and ***BPN's Weekly Propane Newsletter***; click on "COVID-19 News & Resources" at *BPNews.com*.

We will continue covering the pandemic and its effects on the industry. What safety precautions will the industry continue to practice? What effect will the pandemic have on customers? How will the supply of propane be affected by the drop in oil and gas production? ***BPN*** will be reporting on these things. We would like to hear your thoughts and experiences too.

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OUR COVER

When temporary facilities began springing up to deliver services to communities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, propane marketers were there.



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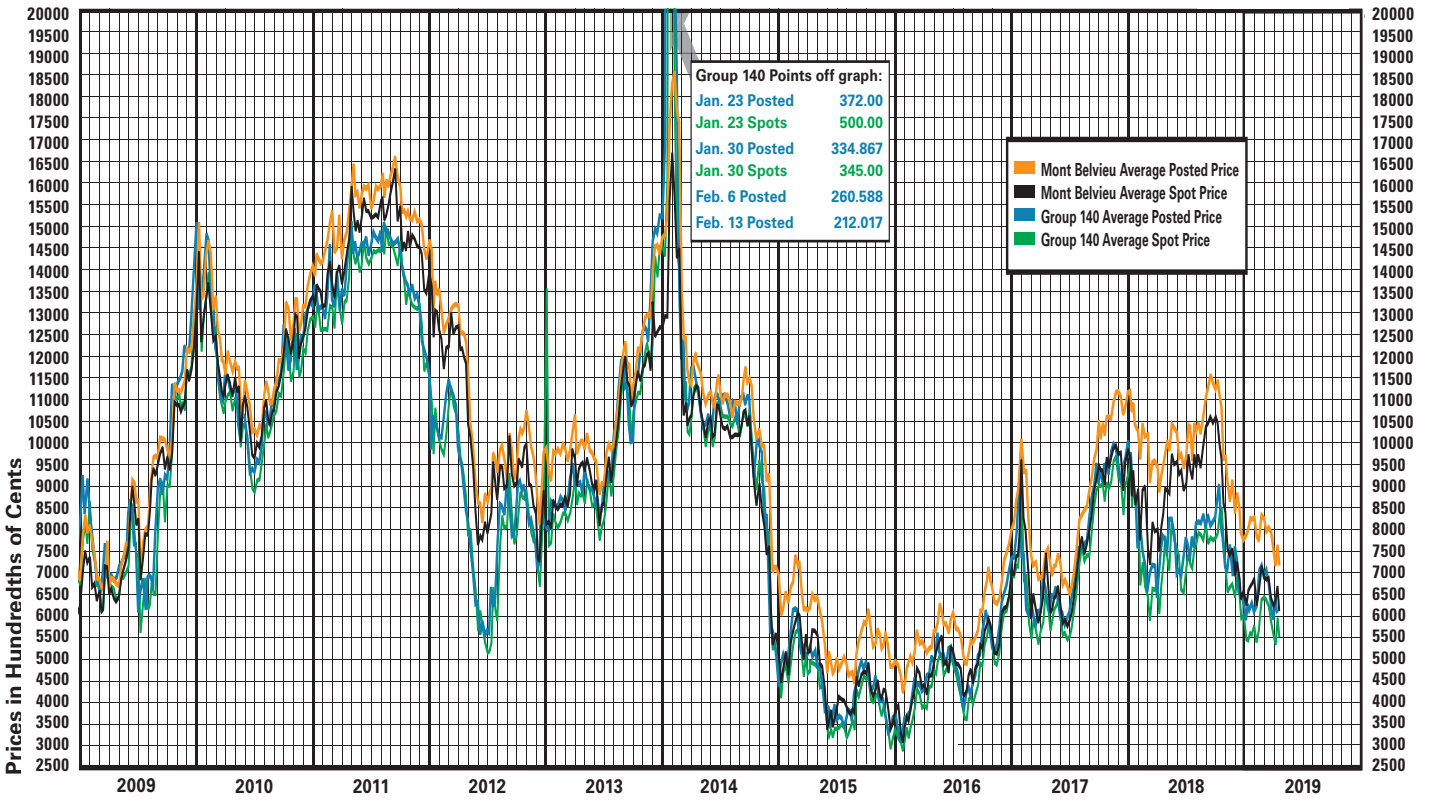
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MONT BELVIEU & GROUP 140 AVERAGE THURSDAY PROPANE PRICES

MID-WEEK AVERAGE POSTED/ SPOT PROPANE PRICES

(Cents per Gallon)

Date	Mont Belvieu		Group 140	
	POSTED	SPOT	POSTED	SPOT
3-12-20	43.340	34.50-35.25	36.222	28.50-29.375
3-19-20	37.007	28.50-29.75	28.872	22.75-23.25
3-26-20	34.673	26.75-27.625	29.548	22.50-22.75
4-2-20	36.590	25.00-26.625	32.020	24.25-25.625
4-9-20	37.340	30.50-32.75	35.170	29.00-31.00
4-16-20	43.173	33.875-34.625	40.246	33.75-35.00

CANADIAN INVENTORIES

(April 1, 2020)
Thousand Cubic Meters

PROPANE

Region	4-20	3-20	Change	4-19
Propane—East	126.3	151.9	–16.9%	59.0
Propane—West	286.0	243.5	+17.5%	350.2
Total Propane	**412.3**	**395.4**	**+4.3%**	**409.2**

BUTANE

Butane—East	89.0	64.2	+38.6%	168.5
Butane—West	265.1	218.3	+21.4%	607.8
Total Butane	**354.1**	**282.5**	**+25.3%**	**776.3**

Source: National Energy Board

U.S. PROPANE INVENTORIES

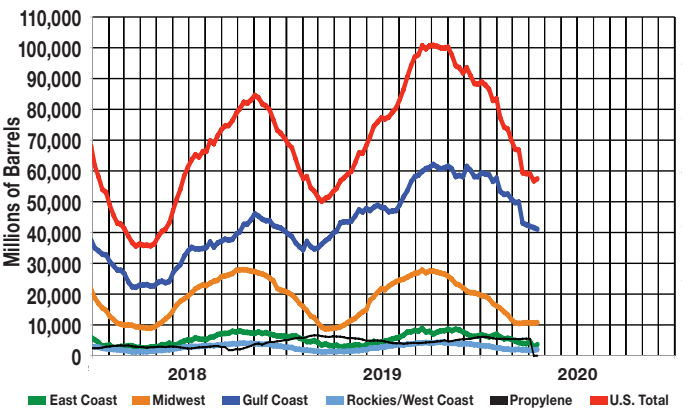
(March 20, 2020 to April 17, 2020 and One Year Ago)
Thousand Barrels

	3/20/20	3/27	4/3	4/10	4/17	4/19/19
East Coast	3,964	3,922	4,659	2,768	3,633	3,037
Midwest	10,539	10,742	10,668	10,609	10,759	9,933
Gulf Coast	43,082	42,543	41,985	41,617	41,066	37,509
Rockies/West	1,839	1,926	1,715	1,786	1,983	1,318
U.S. Total	59,424	59,134	59,027	56,780	57,442	51,797
Propylene	5,496	5,535	5,473	N/A	N/A	5,982

Source: Energy Information Agency

U.S. PROPANE INVENTORIES

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WHAT HAPPENED IN CRUDE OIL?

JEFF THOMPSON

Monday, April 20, 2020, made history. Crude oil for the first time ever traded negative on the NYMEX futures contract. Crude oil has traded negative on occasion for physical barrels off the NYMEX. In those cases of negative trading for physical barrels, it typically is a high-sulfur grade oil that cannot be easily refined. The underlying issue for off NYMEX negative crude oil trading and NYMEX negative trading is the same, storage.

Typically, when a crude oil contract is getting ready to expire, a few days to a week before expiration, the market starts to work down the open interest in the contract. The open interest is simply the number of contracts outstanding for the contract month. Most of the time, with two or three days left, there might be 5000 to 20,000 contracts left in open interest. This normally is a manageable number of contracts.

On April 20, there were over 100,000 contracts open interest on the NYMEX May WTI crude contract. This is approximately 5 to 10 times the normal number of contracts that need to be cleared before trading ends for that contract month. With the national "stay-at-home" policy in place, crude oil and refined products have started to build at a much faster pace than normal. The projections and models suggest that larger than normal builds will continue for the foreseeable future. Additionally, the expectation of normal demands even after "stay-at-home" is lifted later this year is diminishing as every week passes.

This is creating a situation globally and in the United States that crude oil and refined product storages are filling to capacity. It is hard to fully grasp how full storages are in the U.S. and world. It is reasonable to think that by the end of May or June, storages around the globe will be full. This is why the market saw the price collapse of crude oil on April 20. There is nowhere to put the crude oil. In the next 60 to 90 days, there will be even less space to put crude oil in a refinery system or storage.

So, on Monday, April 20, the market had to figure out a way to accommodate 100,000 crude oil contracts that by Tuesday afternoon would be set for physical delivery in Cushing, Okla., the site for physical delivery of NYMEX WTI crude oil contracts. The only way for this to work was for price discovery in the market. The crude market had to figure out at what price these 100,000 open interest contracts for May WTI could get cleared.

What the market found out was not appealing or welcomed. It took a move down to –$40/bbl for the crude oil market to begin to clear out all the open interest in May. This means that a buyer of May 2020 WTI crude oil had to pay a counterparty $40/bbl to take the buyer's crude oil after the contract value going to zero. This turned into an adult version of the children's game "hot potato"—you hold it; no, you hold it—until prices dove down far enough that open interest in May cleared.

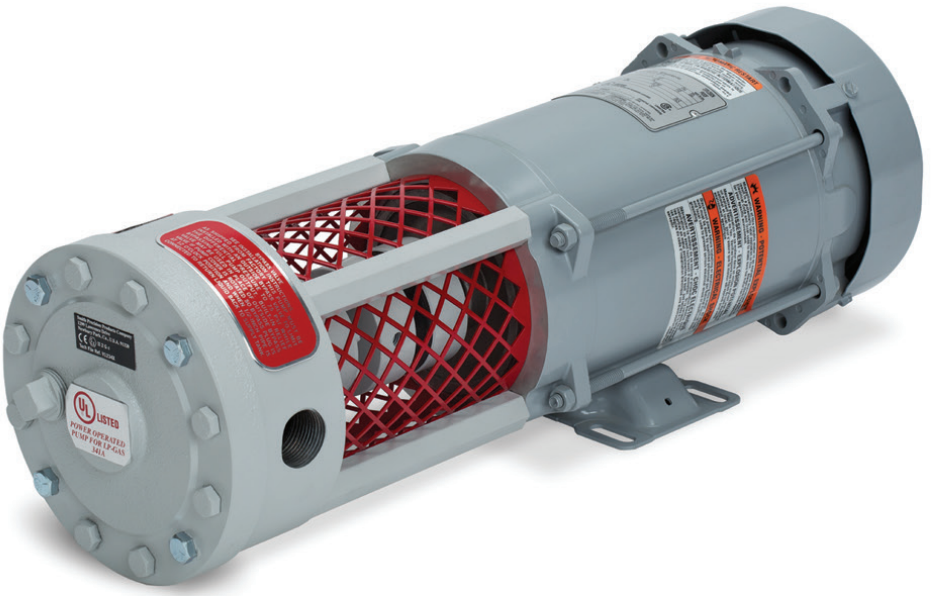
This also tells us that on that Monday, storage costs for crude oil in Cushing ran from $40 to $60/bbl. At $60/bbl storage for May crude, with a little bit of storage possibly still available, what will the June 2020 WTI crude contract do?

Here is a scenario that could easily play out for the June 2020 contract. With little to no storage available by the time June crude oil will show up at Cushing, it is possible the market sees crude oil priced well below –$40/bbl for a period of time over the next few weeks. At this point, the propane-to-crude calculation would become completely worthless. It would be a nonsense negative number.

What this means for propane is not nonsense. This summer could be one of the worst build seasons for propane in many years or decades. With crude oil full and refiners shutdown, the propane market will quickly see how little propane can build. One thing our customers want is stability. One thing the propane market is not going to get this year on the supply side is stability. I think we have tough times ahead.

Jeff Thompson is a business management consultant at Propane Resources. Readers may contact him at (913) 262-8531 or jeff@propaneresources.com.

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HGL PRICES NOSEDIVE IN 2020

Spot prices of hydrocarbon gas liquids (HGLs), produced by both natural gas processors and petroleum refiners, have fallen rapidly since early March, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA). HGL prices now move within a narrow band along with crude oil and natural gas spot prices when measured at their heating values. These three fuels mirror what occurred in the energy markets in 2008 following the financial collapse during the great recession. The recent HGL prices downturn reveals just how pricing dynamics have changed since 2008.

Ethane and propane spot prices at Mont Belvieu (measured in U.S. dollars per million British thermal units, $/MMBtu) fell 17% and 19%, respectively, from January to March 2020. This was caused by market concerns about declining demand related to the 2019 novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) combined with OPEC's shift toward a market-share strategy following its meeting on March 6. At the same time, the price of international crude oil fell about 46%.

Despite lower prices, global demand for oil is expected to decrease due to the economic effects of COVID-19. This current price reduction is similar to 2008, when price declines occurred along with the falloff in demand. The second half of 2008, concerns about demand destruction related to the recession in 2008 drove U.S. ethane and propane prices down 74% and 68%, respectively, and international crude oil prices fell about 69%.

The price spreads between ethane and propane and international crude oil from before and after the price collapses of 2008 and 2020 show just how tightly ethane, and less so propane, now track with natural gas compared with 2008. During the price collapse in 2008, the price spread between crude and natural gas narrowed by $11.92/MMBtu in July 2008 to $1.96 in December 2008. The price spread of ethane and propane to natural gas during the same timeframe in 2008 narrowed by $9.45/MMBtu and $7.21/MMBtu, respectively.

Following the U.S. taking on the role of a net exporter of HGLs in 2011, ethane, and to a lesser extent propane, became increasingly linked with domestic natural gas prices rather than international crude oil prices. This coincided with increased production levels of wet (liquids-rich) natural gas plays and associated natural gas in oil-rich plays. Ethane and propane prices have had downward pressure as a result of growth in natural gas plant liquids (NGPL) production, which nearly doubled from 2010 to 2019. Currently, the price spread between crude oil and natural gas from January 2020 to March 2020 was a decrease of $4.87/MMBtu to $4.11/MMBtu; the price spread between ethane and propane to natural gas decreased by $0.15/MMBtu and $0.57/MMBtu, respectively.



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— ***Jay and Shelli Sweede****, CC Propane; Wapakoneta, OH*





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— **Steve Autore,** *Autore Oil & Propane; Cedarville, MI*



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ALTERNATIVE FUEL TAX CREDIT RETROACTIVELY EXTENDED

The Propane Education & Research Council (PERC) is reminding propane autogas fleet operators to take advantage of the Alternative Fuel Tax Credit that was recently passed by the U.S. Congress as part of the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020.

Propane autogas fleet operators who apply for the tax credit are able to claim a credit for every gasoline gallon equivalent of propane purchased, or about 37 cents per gallon. In addition to extending the credits through Dec. 31, 2020, fleet owners can also apply for credits retroactively for any fuel purchases made in 2018 and 2019. Due to this year's unusual circumstances, the deadline for filing for the credits has been postponed to July 15.

"The extension of the Alternative Fuel Tax Credit is a win for fleet managers, allowing them to further take advantage of the financial benefits of propane autogas in addition to the environmental benefits it provides fleets," said Steve Whaley, director of autogas business development at PERC.

The new law also retroactively extends the Alternative Fuel Vehicle Refueling Property Credit. This credit allows fleet operators to claim up to 30%, or $30,000, of the cost of installing qualified alternative fuel vehicle refueling property, including propane autogas refueling equipment.

Qualifying fleets can learn more about how to apply for these credits through a fact sheet offered by the National Propane Gas Association. PERC encourages all vehicle operators to consult their own tax advisers first regarding any claims for credits or refunds.

For more information about propane autogas vehicles, visit *Propane.com*

PERC ADDS NEW RESOURCES

Two new marketer resources have been added to PERC's (Propane Education & Research Council) resource catalog. One is an updated version of PERC's HVAC and Plumber Technical Training, developed for HVAC and plumbing professionals to learn more about propane appliances and gas distribution system design, installation, and startup. It is available as a printed textbook or as a USB drive that contains the textbook and five short companion videos that can be shared with local vocational schools or other education institutions.

The other is a new safety brochure designed for commercial and industrial propane users. This 40-page, color brochure





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includes general safety information about how to safely use propane in the workplace. Available in packages of 25, it is designed to be shared with workplace employees to help reduce the risk of accidents or injuries when working with propane. For more information, or to place an order, visit *propane.com/resource-catalog/*

TSA GRANTS TEMPORARY EXEMPTION FOR CERTAIN ASSESSMENTS

The Department of Homeland Security Transportation Security Administration (TSA) [Docket No. TSA–2003–14610] Exemption from Renewal of the Hazardous Materials Endorsement Security Threat Assessment for Certain Individuals, grants a temporary exemption from requirements in 49 CFR part 1572 regarding expiration of TSA security threat assessments (STAs) for Hazardous Material Endorsement (HME) holders. For the duration of this exemption, a state may grant an extension of up to 180 days for an HME that expired or would otherwise expire between March 1, 2020, and the end date of this exemption, even if the individual was unable to initiate or complete the required STA before the expiration date.

If the state grants an extension, the individual with an expired HME must initiate the process of renewing their STA for an HME no later than 60 days before the end of the state-granted extension. TSA may extend this exemption at a future date depending on the status of the COVID-19 crisis.

This exemption became effective on April 2, 2020, and remains in effect through July 31, 2020, unless otherwise modified by TSA through a notice published in the *Federal Register.*

For additional information contact Stephanie Hamilton, (571) 227-2851 or *HME.question@tsa.dhs.gov.*

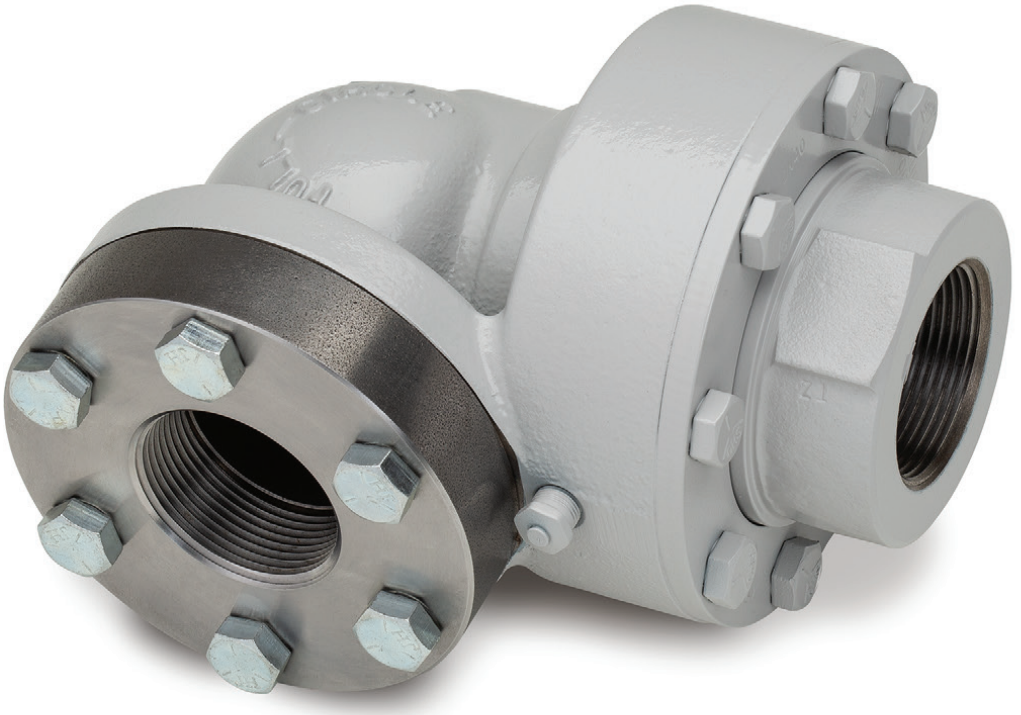
TENTH DISTRICT ENERGY ACTIVITY FELL AT A STEEP PACE

The Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City (Kansas City, Mo.) released the first quarter Energy Survey April 7. The survey revealed that energy activity in the Tenth District decreased at a steep rate and expectations for future activity dropped further, according to Chad Wilkerson, Oklahoma City Branch executive and economist at the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City.

“District energy activity fell sharply during the first quarter of 2020, with our index dropping to its lowest level since we be-



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gan the survey in early 2014," said Wilkerson. "Expectations for future activity also fell to their lowest level since late 2014, as most firms do not expect energy prices to return to profitable levels this year."

The Kansas City Fed's quarterly survey provides information on current and expected activity among energy firms in the Tenth District by monitoring oil and gas-related firms located and/or headquartered in the Tenth District, with results based on total firm activity. A summary of the first quarter survey, as well as results from past surveys and release dates for future surveys can be found at *https://www.kansascityfed.org/research/indicatorsdata/energy*

The Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City serves the Tenth Federal Reserve District, encompassing the western third of Missouri; all of Kansas, Colorado, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Wyoming; and the northern half of New Mexico. More information is available at *www.kansascityfed.org*

TEMPORARY FACILITIES NEED TO FOLLOW NFPA 58 REQUIREMENTS

The National Propane Gas Association (NPGA) has been made aware of temporary facilities being erected to prepare for the increased testing, hospitalization, and quarantine rates that are anticipated as more states address the impacts of the advancing COVID-19 disease. As a result, propane tanks are being installed to fuel space heating and possibly other types of equipment in these temporary facilities.

The association notes that from a code perspective, NFPA 58 provides the necessary requirements to make these types of installations safely. The code defines "Temporary Service" as an installation made for not more than 12 consecutive months at a given location. The 2020 edition of NFPA 58 addresses the installation of portable storage containers for temporary use (Section 6.8.5). The code also provides requirements for the temporary use of skid tanks (6.6.2) and porta-pacs (6.6.3).

Typical ASME containers are also allowed to be used for temporary installations as long as they comply with the requirements for appropriate separation distances from buildings. In addition, the separation requirements for relief valve discharges, fill valves, and fixed maximum liquid level gauges from sources of ignition will come into play as well as the requirements for regulator vent discharges.

Because propane has a role to play in all emergency situations, its safe use is especially important as communities respond to the COVID-19 outbreak by providing safe, isolated care facilities for people infected by the virus. For additional information, please contact Bruce Swiecicki at *bswiecicki@npga.org*



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PROPANE SAFETY DURING A PANDEMIC: POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND TIPS

ERIC LESKINEN

Circumstances caused by the global coronavirus pandemic have disrupted daily life across the world. While most businesses have been required to slow down or completely stop operations, the propane industry remains an essential industry that continues to operate while navigating these uncertain times. Due to this unprecedented scenario, we have gathered several safety tips and suggestions to help guide your propane safety program.

UTILIZING PANDEMIC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The Propane Education & Research Council suggests that all propane marketers have company-specific policies and procedures in place in response to circumstances of COVID-19. Why is this an important addition to your company's Policies & Procedures Manual? Pandemic policies and procedures outline how your company will operate during a pandemic scenario to mitigate risk and continue operations as safely and seamlessly as possible.

A pandemic policy includes the scope of written language to cover legal issues, customer and employee health and welfare, and/or ethical concerns during a pandemic. Pandemic procedures identify individual tasks and completion of core responsibilities as daily operations are adjusted to adhere to pandemic-related guidelines in order to maintain the health and safety of em-

Continued on **Page 51**



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HOW DO YOU OR YOUR COMPANY ADD VALUE IN UNCERTAIN TIMES? WHAT WILL YOU CONTINUE TO DO DIFFERENTLY?

NANCY J. COOP

To be uncertain is to be uncomfortable. This month's question was asked of our participants at the end of March when "shelter-in-place" and other restrictions were being implemented in multiple states around the nation. Can we accept the notion that the only thing certain is the uncertain? What do we learn during unprecedented times? How do we find optimism and be prepared to face changing conditions?

In its third edition, ***BPN's*** VERBATIM column continues to ask provocative questions of our colleagues. Taken from a familiar "Heard on the Street" format, we offer our responders a chance to reply via email, allowing them to be thoughtful and direct. What you are reading here are their personal opinions.

NORTHEAST AND SOUTHEAST

Add value by communicating every day. Reassuring your employees that you will navigate through this with their help. Saying, "Yes, I am scared, but will take this one step at a time."

What will we do differently? Having a cash disaster plan for nine months.

LAURIE IRISH-JONES
Irish Propane
Buffalo, N. Y.

Beyond assets, I believe the true measurement of a company's value is customer loyalty. They are, after all, the true foundation of our business. Attempting to instill in all employees the importance of being an ambassador for your company comes even before good service. It starts with that first phone call. Whether it is a first-time caller or a long-time customer… Every phone call, every service call, every delivery is important.

JUDY TARANOVICH
Proctor Gas
Proctor, Vt.

AmeriGas adds value by being available to our customers 24-7 and our company is committed to continue providing quality service to our customers during this difficult time. As a key component of the supply chain for the propane industry, our trucks remain on the road. What would I do differently? Review crisis/epidemic experts' opinions and share that with my sales team to decrease anxiety and panic.

HAYLEY KARICOFE
AmeriGas
Churchville, Va.

I believe we provide valuable services no matter what the situation. We share information as it becomes available to us, whether it be our lobbyist, NPGA, or other state execs. This has definitely been a challenging time, but our industry is prepared and calm. Unfortunately, in the south our winter has been mediocre at best and is now over, so we are not experiencing any supply or distribution problems.

JENNIFER McKEEN
Georgia Propane Gas Association
Marietta, Ga.

MIDWEST TO THE WEST COAST

We continue to add value to our customers by being available to help solve whatever obstacles they are facing. We add value for our employees by doing what we can to keep them working and as safe as possible. In uncertain times, we will continue to keep ourselves informed and flexible to adjust to the constantly changing restrictions in the different areas we serve in the U.S. and globally.

LAUREN CLARK
Bergquist, Inc.
Toledo, Ohio

Our company has always tried to maintain our stability and operations so we can service our customers with minimal interruption during uncertain times. We believe our commitment is reassuring to them because we keep consistent hours and prices in times of high demand. We feel that while strategic planning for difficult times is important, it must include a supply plan of buying propane from reliable suppliers rather than only looking at the lowest price. We then evaluate each situation that arises and tweak our response based on what is needed.

ROSIE BUSCHUR
McMahan's Bottle Gas
Dayton, Ohio

During these unprecedented times of COVID-19, how very proud I am to be part of the NPGA staff. Our group of professionals continues to gather and disseminate critical information to NPGA members, providing them what they need to not only address the health and safety issues that employees in the propane industry face, but

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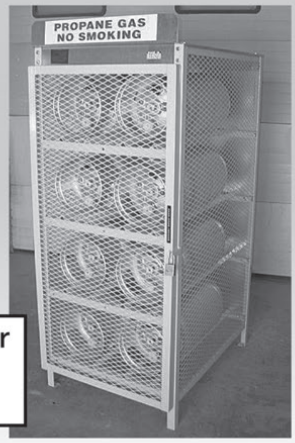
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also to navigate the legal and regulatory pitfalls that companies encounter while continuing to operate in the face of this enormous challenge.

BRUCE SWIECICKI
NPGA (National Propane Gas Association)
Tinley Park, Ill.

Our Leadership team is working hard to ensure our employees are safe and supported in every way so that we can get through this unprecedented situation. As an essential critical infrastructure business, all our field teams are doing their best to take care of our customer needs every day while following all CDC, DOT, state, and federal guidelines.

We will continue to serve our customers and communities through this pandemic and be stronger and more prepared in the future. Keeping personal hygiene and cleanliness in the workplace has been a priority in our offices, vehicles, and equipment and will continue beyond this pandemic as a way of life.

We could not be prouder of our people who are all heroes in this time of national uncertainty and need. As a country, we will always be grateful for the personal commitment and selfless service all our essential critical infrastructure professionals demonstrated during this national crisis.

BOYD H. McGATHEY
Energy Distribution Partners
Parkville, Mo.

These are uncertain times and they do test our abilities. In conversations with customers and suppliers, I think the key is still, "Stick to who you are and what your values are." That doesn't change. We are shifting production to refurb trailers and used equipment, giving customers options while keeping our work force engaged. I don't know that we are doing anything radically different—we need to produce value in some way—the product just changes from season to season.

TRACY TIMMERMAN
JARCO
Salem, Ill.

During uncertain times, everyone, from our employees, customers, and suppliers, experiences more anxiety and concern on how it will affect them. The best way our company adds value is to exercise more compassion, be available to answer concerns, and never lose our values. The COVID-19 pandemic in some ways reminds me of Y2K, and the winter of 2013-14; what we learned then applies today—have a plan that follows best practices, treat everyone with respect, and be honest.

GARY FRANCE
France Propane Service
Schofield, Wis.

Our company and our employees do our best to make accommodations for our customers by offering extra services



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not normally a part of our typical service work, such as pickup and delivery options as well as field service calls that normally would fall outside our area of service. We currently are working to absorb the additional costs involved to help mitigate any downtime and increased cost to the customer during this crisis.

Much of this change to our policy may be helpful to continue if the customer sees enough value in it, and our increased costs may be a good investment in keeping those customers happy in the future.

MILT SWENSON
Westmor Industries
Morris, Minn.

The best way for trade associations to add value during these times is to provide accurate and relevant information to members. There is so much COVID info available, much of which is irrelevant, marketers may get overwhelmed. I try to filter information for relevance before sending it to marketers.

DAN BINNING
Colorado and New Mexico Propane Gas Associations
Arvada, Colo.

While we are mindful of the uncertainty, we are fanatical about maintaining our focus and discipline, which enables us to continue to provide the same great value and exemplary service that we provide in "normal" times.

JASON SOULON
Westmor Industries
Shawnee, Kan.

It is pretty simply in abiding by the local and CDC guidelines to keep our customers in gas. Nothing to change but wait for economy to get moving again.

JOHN KAMPS
Kamps Propane
Manteca, Calif.

SUMMING UP

My takeaway from this sampling of 14 colleagues is that, in large part, "business as usual" for their organizations sets a high bar and by staying the course, they are therefore prepared for the uncertainties of life and business. There's a steady, calm theme that weaves through their responses, helping us to know that the standards and policies they have put in place are sturdy. They stand them in good stead even when a pandemic threatens havoc. As an essential fuel in every state of the union, propane has been integral in providing citizens the reliable product they count on throughout the year. With good reason, these responders reflect a sense of pride in being a part of the LPG industry.

Nancy Coop is an industry advocate. She serves as a managing director at Cetane Associates. Readers may contact her at ncoop@cetane.net.







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MOBILIZING PROPANE

JOE COLANERI

The coronavirus presents America and the world with the challenge of a generation. It will test our health, our economy, our communities, our national character, our collective will. And propane, one of America's oldest and greatest industries, deeply embedded in the character of America, is poised to help lead the nation on the journey we will be taking together. Propane's leadership will reflect America's strength, indomitable spirit, sense of community—its resilience.

THE CHALLENGE

Long before the coronavirus began to dominate our lives, our very existence, the propane industry had begun facing its own existential threats with California being ground zero. The emergence of policies and regulations favoring electric vehicles and compromising propane's historic markets had begun. Those trends are accelerating exponentially on the west coast and are moving east. When the state of Hawaii considers a carbon tax in the current legislative session that taxes propane at a higher rate than it taxes diesel and gasoline, the wheels have come off, it's a whole new ballgame. The propane industry needs to take notice and mobilize. Inevitably these trends will go national in the absence of a well-coordinated, well-messaged opposing strategy.

MOBILIZATION

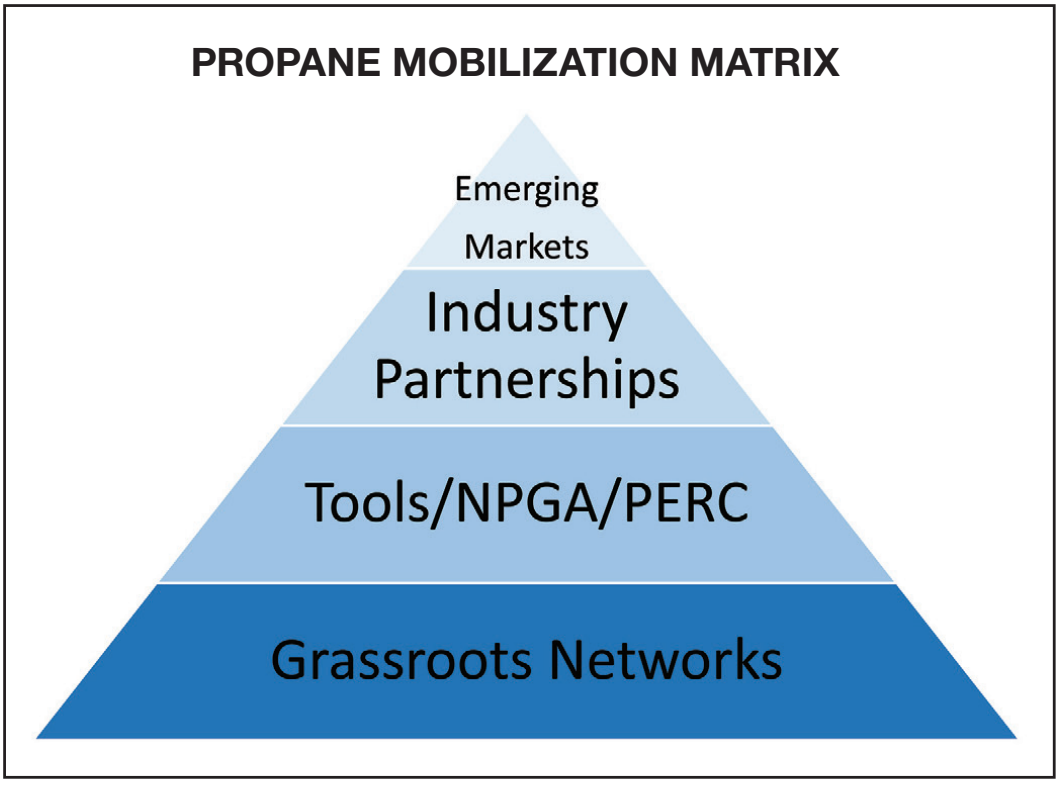
The propane industry has formidable and imaginative tools with which to communicate, develop, organize, and execute—reflective of its entrepreneurial spirit. Those skills are needed now. The industry has long built a grassroots network where it can get the biggest bang for the industry's buck. But it needs to engage within its core constituencies in rural America, not only for legislative and regulatory relief, but to build relationships and partnerships.

The economy will recover, but it may not resemble the one we are leaving behind. The industry's foresight in developing a strong grassroots constituency, and the resources of PERC, may give propane the momentum to help shape a new industry powered by traditional and new constituencies.

BUILDING THE PROPANE POLICY INFRASTRUCTURE OF TOMORROW

Sustaining and growing the propane industry in a world turned upside down and facing significant societal change will require the propane industry to think introspectively and act prospectively and aggressively. It will need to learn from the past while it channels the future.

Job one for the industry should include an evaluation of all political and policy relationships that it can work with to build value. New industry leadership at NPGA provides a window to begin to build industry value through policy, but windows don't stay open for long. The competition is doing the same thing. The industry constituency is historically rural, so the political build-out can start there. But its challenges are not only rural, they are at the state, regional, and national levels as well. California, for example, is moving aggressively against all carbon fuels, so the industry's response needs to acknowledge that reality and work toward strategies that will reflect reality and not a fanciful notion of what once was. The trends in California will not be reversed. If anything, they will only become more challenging.



Propane needs strong allies in Congress—it needs leaders who will take up the propane cause—allies who link their political success to propane's business success. The most successful industries on Capitol Hill have built strong working relationships with members of Congress for years. What propane does not need are so-called "photo op allies" who pander for the industry's political contributions, but care little for the industry's issues or its constituency. Logically, propane could build its al-

lies within its core constituency in rural America, but, as noted, the industry's challenges are not only rural, they are increasingly at the state, regional, and national levels. Thus, the challenge is more complex now than it might have been even a few years ago. What is a need now is a grassroots mobilization—think of Propane Days on steroids—a year-round effort in the district, state, and federal level.

MARKETS ARE THE MESSAGE

Propane needs a long-term strategy to counter the increasing challenges at the state level while building momentum for regional and nationally focused initiatives. The message can center around the markets being pursued by the industry, which suggests resilience, renewable propane, and partnerships with other technologies. This is reflective of increasing policy trends, which often begin at the state level and go national.

Employing a classic grassroots strategy could involve working initially in select states to pursue the inclusion of propane in state clean energy legislation. California, ground zero for the anti-carbon movement, is a logical choice, but other states could provide opportunities in which to examine and test the viability of new propane markets involving renewable propane, resilience, and hybrid gensets as a counterpoint against the move toward electric. The idea would also involve a strategy that underpins the grassroots with strategic communications, public education, and advocacy. The markets would become the message. In this example, NPGA and PERC complement each other in juxtaposing advocacy with education and market development with communications.

PARTNERSHIPS ARE THE CATALYST

The world is adjusting to a new economic reality grounded in societal resilience and decentralization. That's the view from 30,000 feet. The coronavirus may have changed forever the way we conduct business and live our lives.

What may hold this transition together is the ability of the industry to find common cause with stakeholders and partners who share a similar vision in building and helping implement new societal economic paradigms.

Perhaps an example will best illustrate the apparent transition and the political and economic urgency to form partnerships.

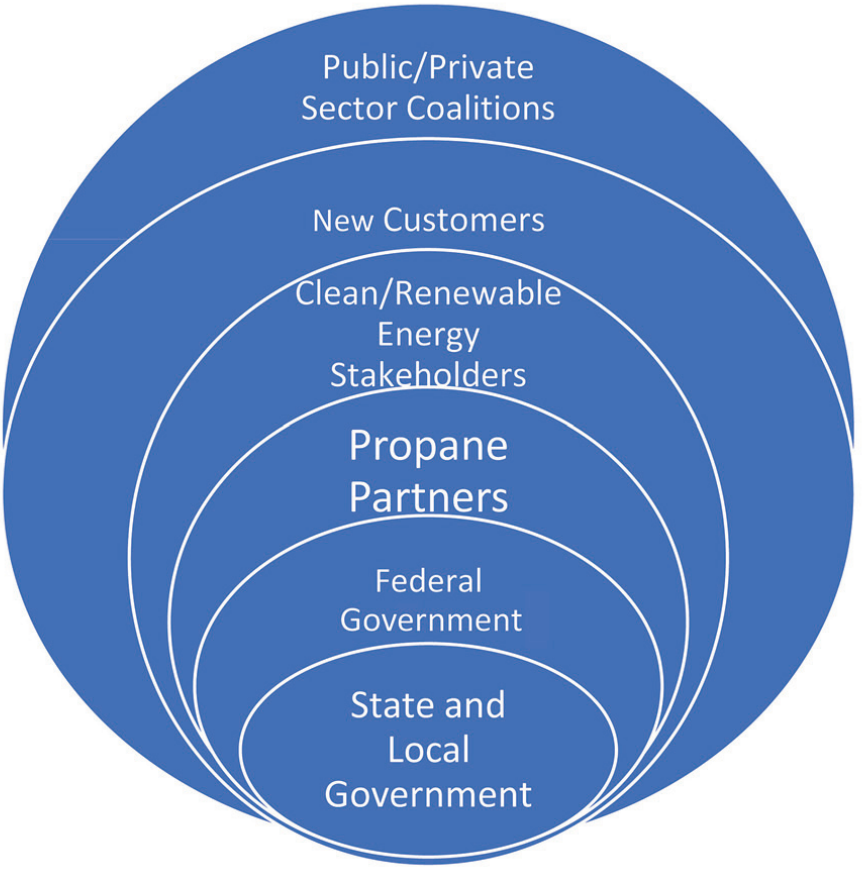
PROJECT SIMULATION

Consider the growing national trend toward energy resilience and how the propane industry might implement a resilience strategy in a unique regionally specific area.

A national resilience initiative for propane could build replicable local, regional, and national resilience propane power generation applications, tailored specifically to respond to disasters and electric utility grid infrastructure power shutdowns that would provide currently unmet market opportunities for propane hybrid genset and power generation technologies in California and across the country. Such an effort would involve the development of strategic public and private partnerships and would capitalize on propane's low emissions and clean energy potential. Primary goals would be to showcase propane's regional adaptability and versatility in preparedness and response to natural and man-made disasters as clean energy, low-emitting, renewably-fueled hybrid electrical power generating systems capable of backing up and sustaining other renewable and non-renewable energy systems over a wide geographic area and across constituencies and markets.

Propane punches all the tickets—in its ability to be renewable, build hybrid systems with solar and electric technology, and deliver resilience to schools, hospitals, construction, agriculture, state and local government, the federal government, and numerous public and private economic sectors.

PARTNERSHIP AND MARKET DEMONSTRATION SIMULATION



Continued on **Page 54**



A trailer normally used as a mobile command unit during emergencies is stationed outside the Foster Fuels headquarters and used as a medical checkpoint.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM ADJUSTS TO COVID-19

STEVE RELYEA

As the threat of COVID-19 began to be known in this country, Foster Fuels (Brookneal, Va.) responded in many ways. For one, a trailer normally used as a mobile command unit during emergencies was stationed outside its headquarters and used as a medical checkpoint. There, a nurse conducts daily temperature checks on Foster Fuels team members to spot any early signs of the virus.

Foster Fuels transports fuel across the nation and provides full propane services in Virginia. Adapting to challenging circumstances is nothing new to the company's team members and its dedicated standby emergency division, Foster Fuels Mission Critical. Mission Critical provides emergency fuel supply services nationwide and is the prime emergency fuel contractor for the federal government. It has been responding to hurricanes, snowstorms, tornados, fires, power outages, and other widescale emergencies since 2003.

"Our contracts cover propane, diesel, gasoline, and Jet A, and we refuel anything that is key infrastructure, including generators and fleets," Chelsea Harrison, vice president of marketing at Foster Fuels, told ***BPN***. "Mission Critical has a different staff and leadership, but works closely with the rest of Foster Fuels. During a major activation, we all work hand in hand."

The trailer used as the medical checkpoint is one of four that are among Mission Critical's assets being used during the COVID-19 pandemic to keep operations running. "The trailers are usually mobile command centers or sleeping cabs, depending on the need," Harrison said. "A nurse was brought in for this. She checks temperatures and answers questions."



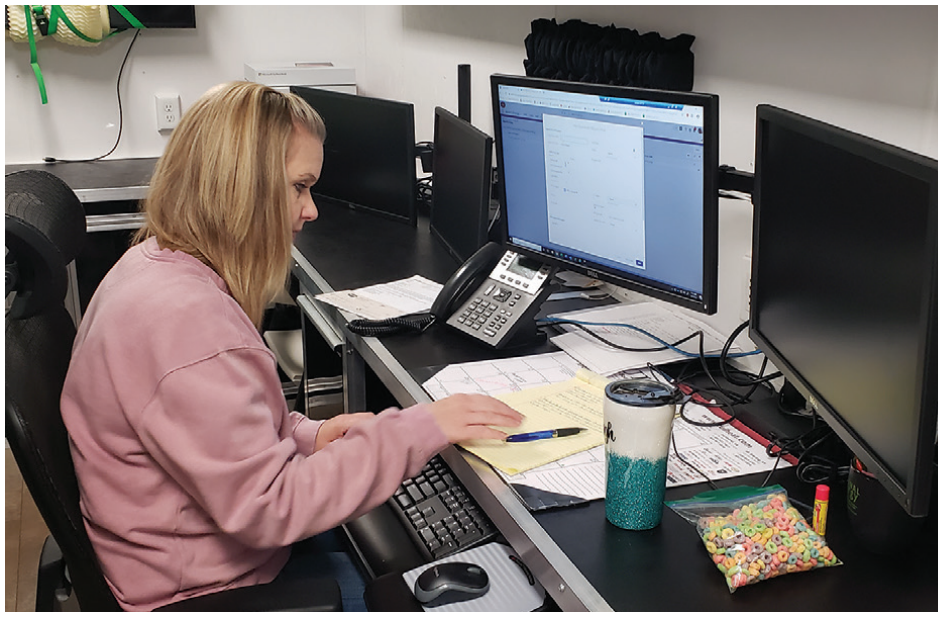
In the trailer, a nurse conducts daily temperature checks on Foster Fuels team members to spot any early signs of the COVID-19 virus.

That is one of several preventive measures Foster Fuels has taken in response to COVID-19, while its operations continue without interruption.

Prevent runouts: Foster Fuels alerted customers to check their fuel level. A stay-at-home order may cause an increased use of a propane-burning product such as a tankless water heater and require an adjustment to their fueling schedule, the company explained. Those who have signed up for auto-fill were asked to inform the Foster Fuels team of their increased usage so the company could adjust the timing of their next fill.

Stock up: Foster Fuels Mission Critical suggested that its commercial customers stock up on supplies critical to ongoing business operations. The company invited them to call for top-offs, emergency deliveries, or with any questions. "Our fuel quality team went out this morning to provide services," Harrison said. "HR talked with them to make sure they had the proper PPE and followed best practices."

Disinfect: At Foster Fuels locations, employees consistently sanitize company assets and workstations. Handwashing stations have been installed outside Foster Fuels' headquarters. "We have handwashing stations before entering the building," Harrison reported. "We've also placed hand sanitizer everywhere. A team member is constantly going through wiping down desks and disinfecting everything."



At Foster Fuels locations, employees consistently sanitize company assets and workstations. A team member is constantly going through wiping down desks and disinfecting everything.

Close showrooms: Foster Fuels has temporarily closed public access to all its propane showrooms to ensure the safety of customers and employees. If customers need assistance, they are invited to call Foster Fuels. If necessary, showroom team members will come outside to assist customers, while practicing social distancing.

Social distance: Filling station locations are still offering propane cylinder refill services. Here, too, social distancing is practiced. "We stay six feet apart, following best practices," Harrison explained. "We try to be approachable without being *literally* approachable."

Go paperless: Foster Fuels invited customers to go paperless and receive paperless statements to remove the chance of exposure to COVID-19 via mailed items. The company's online portal enables users to view deliveries and invoices, make payments, order fuel, and manage all aspects of their Foster Fuels account.

Minimize contact with surfaces: Foster Fuels has stopped placing delivery tickets on customers' doorknobs. Until further notice, tickets are being placed inside of tank lids to minimize touching surfaces to protect both customers and employees.

Inform customers: The company has been sharing the protective measures and procedures it is taking to ensure the health and safety of employees and customers via updates on its web page and social media.

Update employees: Foster Fuels president and CEO Watt R. Foster, Jr. has been hosting weekly video updates with the Foster Fuels team during the COVID-19 epidemic. One of the Town Halls was posted on social media to share what the Foster Fuels team is doing during these trying times.

Partner with others: Foster Fuels has partnered with Meals on Wheels to pack and deliver meals to local residents who are homebound. Team members also took part in their local Red Cross Emergency Blood Drive. The American Red Cross has had an unprecedented number of blood drive cancellations due to COVID-19, the company explained. Foster Fuels also encouraged members of the community to support these efforts too.

To keep up to date on the pandemic and best practices, Foster Fuels has a COVID-19 task force and closely follows Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines. A key to being prepared for the current situation—as with emergencies and the daily work of a propane company—is training. "Pretty much anything we can be trained on, we will be," Harrison said. "Anything to mitigate risk to our employees and customers and ensure we are ready to serve." ■



Handwashing stations have been installed outside Foster Fuels' headquarters, for team members to use before entering the building.

BPN



North tent at St. Luke's hospital, Twin Falls, Idaho, fueled by Suburban Propane.

PROPANE DELIVERS HEAT, HOT WATER FOR THOSE RESPONDING TO COVID-19

STEVE RELYEA



Ferrellgas locations across the country have set up temporary heat at pop-up tents.

When temporary facilities began springing up to deliver services to communities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, propane marketers were there to supply the fuel needed to provide warm air and hot water.

Examples include temporary housing facilities, RVs, and tents:

- The AmeriGas New Orleans office delivered propane to temporary facilities set up for quarantined residents. The propane-fueled appliances included shower stations, food trailers, washers, and dryers.
- Suburban Propane's location in Newark, N.J., responded to a request to provide heat and hot water for RV units used by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) staff in New York City. FEMA obtained special permission for Suburban's bobtails to deliver propane to the NYC area.
- Ferrellgas locations across the country set up temporary heat at pop-up testing and evaluation tents used by hospitals and healthcare facilities.

Those sorts of pop-up tents have been supplied with propane for temporary heating by AmeriGas, Suburban, and Ferrellgas alike and have become a symbol of propane's contribution to the response to COVID-19.

The large, outdoor tents are used by local hospitals and healthcare facilities due to the widespread nature of the outbreak, explained Scott Brockelmeyer, vice president, marketing and communications, at Ferrellgas (Overland Park, Kan.). Individuals showing symptoms of the virus can walk into those tents and be tested.



Pop-up testing and evaluation tent, fueled by Ferrellgas.

For temporary heating applications like this, many different sizes of heaters are used. Ferrellgas supplies smaller heaters, under 300,000 Btu, and it has trade allies who supply larger heaters. Ferrellgas also provides safety training as needed to the people who are in charge of the site.

"This shows how versatile and how valuable a product propane is," Brockelmeyer said. "We and others in the industry have provided temporary heating for tents for many years, so this is an exercise we have been through before. We will take good care of these folks; we hope it's not a customer base we will have for long."

"We have new requests coming in each day," he added. "It's a sobering reminder of how serious this pandemic is."

UNDERSTANDING THEIR NEEDS

Suburban Propane, too, has been partnering with medical facilities and hospitals to provide temporary heat for medical and triage tents that are being used to test and treat patients with COVID-19.

At the tents supplied by Suburban, typical setups include portable heaters that could range from 75,000 Btu to 250,000 Btu. Nandini Sankara, spokesperson for Suburban Propane (Whippany, N.J.), said a location may have one tent or multiple tents, with each tent having one or two heaters.

"We work closely with the medical facilities to understand their needs in these critical and time-sensitive situations to help present a feasible solution that meets their needs in the shortest time possible," Sankara explained. "The size of the heater is determined by the size of the tent. We have sized the tanks to keep a minimum of three days' supply.

"As safety is our No. 1 priority, our tanks are installed by our highly trained technicians," she added. "The heaters must be placed in low-traffic areas to limit contact. The tanks must be placed in a location that is close to the heater and each tank location must have a bulkhead and/or a barrier to keep anyone or anything from coming in contact with the tank."

AmeriGas (King of Prussia, Pa.) has provided pop-up support for COVID-19 testing facilities throughout the country using propane cylinders or bulk temp heat to power outdoor heaters and pop-up facilities.

"Although many of us are experiencing warmer weather as we have entered the spring, there are first responders working long hours in outdoor testing facilities that still have early morning temperatures in the 30s," said Chris Cook, vice president of marketing and cylinder exchange at AmeriGas. "The fact that propane doesn't require a grid to turn on is just one of many reasons why the versatility and availability of propane cannot be matched by any other fuel source."

AmeriGas assisted in providing propane cylinders to power outdoor heaters at a pilot outdoor testing facility in Philadelphia that was set up by Rite Aid Corp. after receiving a directive from the White House COVID-19 Response Working Group.

At the Rite Aid facility, there were five primary tents and some smaller ones for check-in and a break area. These were equipped with 11 standard patio heaters having an hourly Btu requirement in the range of 42,000 Btus to 48,000 Btus.



Rite Aid testing site, Philadelphia, Pa., fueled by AmeriGas.



Cape May Department of Health, Cape May, N.J., fueled by Suburban Propane.



South tent at St. Luke's hospital, Twin Falls, Idaho, fueled by Suburban Propane.



"When customers want something done in a certain location, we can accommodate that," says Scott Brockelmeyer of Ferrellgas.

To power those heaters, AmeriGas was able to arrange supply for the testing site within hours of the call, "and not only had cylinders delivered to the site early the next morning, but then had 54 more cylinders in cages the following day to ensure ongoing supply while minimizing delivery requirements," Douglas McLaughlin, national account manager at AmeriGas, reported.

"On-hand capacity is a function of two primary factors: consumption requirements and distance from our plant to the location," he explained.

CLEAN, LOW-COST, PORTABLE

Each of these representatives pointed to several characteristics of propane that make it the fuel to be used in applications like these.

"Propane is best because it burns relatively clean versus other fossil fuels, is low cost and portable," McLaughlin said.

A recent FINCH podcast interview of Cook pointed to the value of working with propane retailers who have the resource capabilities and the infrastructure to answer a call for support at any time, any day. (You can hear the podcast, "AmeriGas Has Your Back," at *https:blog.finchbrands.com/amerigas-podcast*.)

"In times like today where there's a lot of uncertainty in the country and quite frankly in the world, this is where AmeriGas is positioned really well," Cook said. "We have a flexible organization and haven't skipped a beat on business continuity. We've been able to assist our customers who may be experiencing financial hardships due to COVID-19 through payment programs and waiving late fees, and our online experience has enabled our customers to fully engage with us remotely whether it's scheduling a delivery, view their complete account information, or pay their bill. It's really allowed us to serve our customers in a pretty unique way."

Sankara of Suburban pointed to propane's clean-burning properties, energy efficiency, availability, and portability. "The ease of portability of propane makes it ideal to use in situations like this where a location may be remote and installation must be done on short notice," she said. "The heating equipment and propane are all readily available locally, are mobile, and can be installed quickly to meet the medical units' time-sensitive needs."

Brockelmeyer of Ferrellgas pointed to the versatile, easily transportable nature of propane. "This allows it to be used where and when the customer wants it to be used. That is a tremendous advantage. When customers want something done in a certain location, we can accommodate that. As additional tanks are needed, we can easily add tanks."

He added, "I would also like to say something to the folks in our industry. We have long provided essential services to our residential and commercial consumers. When the pandemic hit, it's an entirely different sphere. It's heroic what the folks in our industry are doing. I am humbled and very proud." ■

STRATEGIES FOR WORKING AT HOME

PAT THORNTON

The coronavirus pandemic has changed life dramatically in countless ways. As many propane employees are adapting to safe social distancing while continuing the frontline work of delivering propane and taking care of customers, other industry members who work more behind the scenes in offices have been sent home to work in compliance with stay-at-home requirements for employees.

There are some in the propane industry who have been working at home for a number of years, including the entire staff of TSN Communications, a public relations firm that serves quite a few propane clients. TSN Communications' clients include the Propane Education & Research Council (PERC), ROUSH CleanTech, Superior Energy Systems, Blue Bird, and the propane associations of Missouri, Illinois, and Virginia. According to TSN Communications' president and CEO Greg Zilberfarb, 14 of the firm's employees now work from home in Virginia, Texas, Arizona, Illinois, Montana, Florida, Pennsylvania, and Ohio.

PUTTING EXPERIENCE INTO A BOOK

Janice Brewster Weiser, who began working from home in 2000, joined TSN Communications in 2015. "I was working at a job I loved before [working at home], but my commute ate up three hours a day and telecommuting wasn't an option," Weiser stated in a book she authored recently: "Work at Home Happy," which is available in an e-book format via Amazon. "As a new mom, I wanted a different life. So, I wrote my resignation, signed on to work remotely for a dot-com across the country, and set up an office in my home. Since then, I've worked as a full-time telecommuter and as my own boss, freelance writing and editing for a wide range of clients."

With many years of experience performing her job from her home office, Weiser decided to write a book advising others who may find themselves with the opportunity to work at home. "I believe in writing about what I know," she explained.



Janice Brewster Weiser

"There are many people working at home for the first time right now. It can be fun and rewarding with a lot of flexibility, but there can be a lot of distractions to keep in check." She noted that 1.8 million people worked at home at least part-time in the United States in 2005, but that the number had more than doubled to 4 million even before the coronavirus forced many more to change their working arrangements. "I tapped experts for advice, surveyed other teleworkers, and mined books and articles to gather 101 tips to make working from home the best possible option for you."

The book's four chapters tackle major aspects of working from home. The first chapter, "Happy Space," discusses key aspects of the at-home work environment. Keeping kids' belongings and other household items from cluttering the work desk is the first of many nuggets of advice. Further advice includes details on computer technology without corporate technical support at your fingertips; ergonomics for comfort and efficiency; using space efficiently; and keeping others in the house from being too much of a distraction. Looking and feeling healthy is encouraged, especially as video communications allow for plenty of visual interaction with the outside world.

"Getting it Done," the second chapter, focuses on productivity. "For me, working at home motivates me to get work done so I can spend more time doing other things for myself and my family," Weiser said. With advice from many, she acknowledges that some of the tips in Chapter Two may be contradictory and readers will need to decide which of the tips and ideas work best for them personally. One idea is to choose one important thing to focus on each day and see it through to completion. Others include blocking out the home distractions, writing down distractions in a journal to focus on later, keeping to-do lists on index cards, taking a 10- to 20-minute nap to refresh, avoiding social media becoming a distraction, and moving deadlines up a week to be prepared for unexpected demands

on your time. She stresses that when working at home it is still important to get dressed and ready for work, the same as going to an office full of people.

In chapter three, "Happy and Healthy," Weiser shares tips on making the work-at-home experience happy and healthy considering all the life challenges faced daily from both work life and personal life. Tips include meditation techniques, balancing time spent working with social and fun activity, setting aside a two-hour period each week just to think, taking a break from your home office midday for an activity outside the house, taking time to do activities that raise the heart rate, and taking time to interact with others socially. She notes that some who work at home enjoy having regular social outings with others who also work at home.

"Work Like a Boss," the fourth and final chapter, focuses on increasing productivity and profit. With multiple clients, Weiser notes that workload can often be feast or famine. She discusses ways to fill downtime by increasing future projects. For those who are self-employed, she stresses the importance of being aware and on top of keeping the project pipeline full and doing all billing and tax work on a schedule to keep money flowing in.

TAKEAWAYS FOR TSN TEAM

In a discussion with ***BPN***, Zilberfarb and fellow staff member Adrianna Amato joined Weiser to talk about the ideas shared in "Work at Home Happy" and how they apply them in their daily work. "For me, the tips on the height of computer monitors in relation to eye level have been very helpful," Zilberfarb said. "With as much time as a person can spend at the desk each day, a few simple adjustments can prevent a lot of long-term neck pain."

"The tips about setting up the workspace are very important,"



Adrianna Amato



Greg Zilberfarb

Amato said. "They really help me get in the work mindset. Also, getting dressed each day and not just working in jammies really helps me be more productive."

Weiser cites one of her tips that came from Francesco Cirillo in his book, "The Pomodoro Technique," as a very useful technique for her. She sets a timer for 25 minutes to focus solely on a task at hand and then allows five minutes for a break. The name of the technique came about as Cirillo's timer was shaped like a tomato, a "pomodoro" in Italian.

As for working as a group, Zilberfarb has been pleased with the low turnover of staff and the communication within the team at TSN Communications. He notes that about 11 staff members are full-time employees and three work part-time as outsources who receive a 1099 tax form. Weiser and Amato both cited Basecamp and Google Docs as online software programs that help TSN Communications' team stay connected and efficiently share information. "Often we can communicate electronically, but it is also good to just pick up the phone and talk sometimes," Weiser added.

Zilberfarb said the TSN Communications team and spouses or significant others get together once a year in Virginia for meetings and social activities. "It's always good to have face-to-face time within our group," Zilberfarb said. "I'm glad everyone can work in a home environment that agrees with them, but still have a way to communicate effectively with each other."

Recently Weiser and TSN Communications offered free downloads to recipients of the TSN Communications' newsletter for a five-day period and 241 people took them up on the offer. Books are now available for a nominal charge via Amazon.

"Work at Home Happy" by Janice Brewster Weiser is available at *http://amzn.com/B07C6LM58J*. ■

SUPPLY SITUATION GOOD THROUGH 2020, BUT WATCH EXPORTS

STEVE RELYEA

Despite the volatility in the oil and gas markets, and in spite of expected declines, albeit slowly, in production, propane inventories should be in good condition for the remainder of 2020. So said an industry analyst, reporting on the supply situation after the first few weeks of turmoil caused by the oil price war and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Darryl Rogers, vice president, midstream oil and NGL, at IHS Markit, spoke with ***BPN*** April 21. The oil price war between the Saudis and the Russians had begun in early March, evidenced by a surge in production. At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic was expanding, leading to a drop-off in consumption.

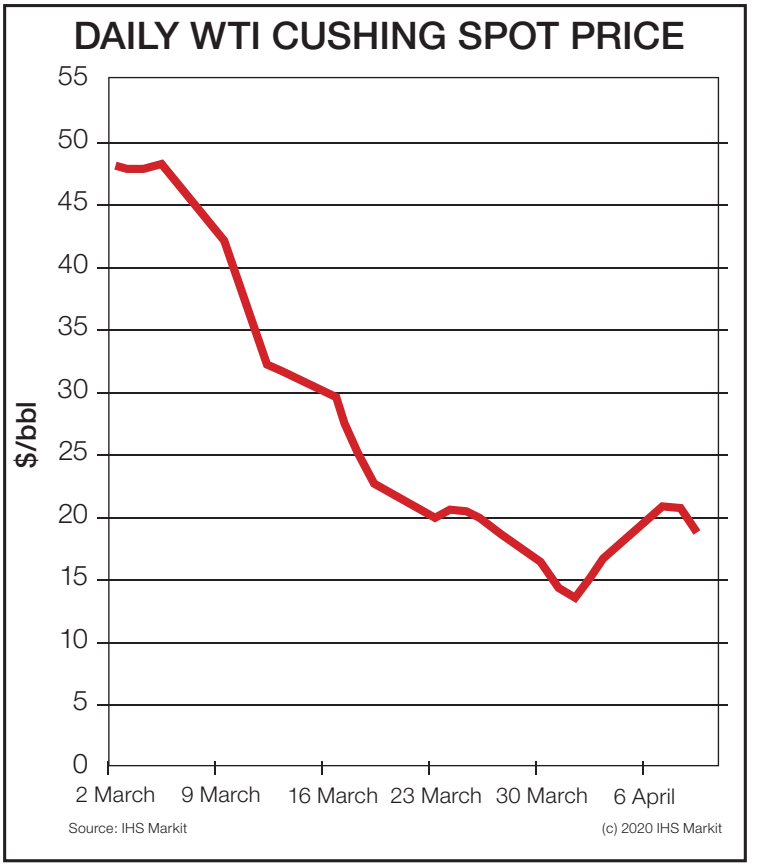
The results could be seen in the price of crude oil.

As a point of reference, Rogers pointed to an earlier U.S. crude oil production peak and oversupply situation that occurred in 2015. At the peak, in April of that year, the price was $60/barrel. A correction followed, and by February 2016, the price was $30. That was down 50% in eight months, or roughly 6% per month.

Compare that to this year's turmoil. When the oil price war started March 6, the price of crude oil was $46/barrel. A month later, on April 5, it was $13/barrel. The price had plummeted 72% in one month. On April 20, the March WTI contract price fell to negative pricing and as this was written, April 21, it was trading at around $4/barrel.

"This is just a crazy time," Rogers noted. "The market is significantly out of balance."

The price of propane fell too, although not as much, having been pulled down along with crude oil pricing. Propane and crude had been somewhat disconnected; propane had been at 30% of the value of crude in early March, but it was at 50% in early April.



END-USE MARKETS

The turmoil caused by the dramatic changes in both supply and demand will continue to resonate in propane's end-use markets, Rogers said.

In the residential market, demand may uptick as consumers stay indoors during stay-at-home orders.

However, in the commercial market, there may be less demand as many businesses are shut down due to COVID-19.

In both residential and commercial, though, demand is lower anyway because the heating season is over.

In propane's third end-use market, chemical consumption, demand is expected to fall. Propane has become a favored feedstock versus ethane, because its price fell with crude, but at the same time overall chemical demand will be down.

The decline in chemical consumption resonates in exports, propane's fourth end-use market, so exports will decrease too.

"We may have more propane available here for the balance of this year, if there is less demand outside the U.S.," Rogers noted.

UPSTREAM PRODUCTION

On the supply side, with lower prices and less demand for oil, U.S. upstream oil production is being reduced and is some cases shut-in. The current view at IHS Markit is that U.S. crude oil production, which is at 13 million barrels a day, will be at 10 million barrels a day by the

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While speaking at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), Charlie Morecraft shows his scars where he cut his sleeves during an accident.

FORMER EXXON EMPLOYEE DEVOTES LIFE TO SHARING MEMORABLE SAFETY STORY

PAT THORNTON

August 2, 1980, started as an ordinary day for former Exxon employee Charlie Morecraft. Work procedures he had performed more than a thousand times had become routine and he, like many industrial employees, had become lax about wearing his protective glasses. He also had his fire-retardant shirtsleeves rolled up, exposing his arms. “Your readers will be able to relate to this,” Morecraft told ***BPN***. (At the time of the interview, he was scheduled to speak at the 2020 Mid-States Propane Expo. Later, due to COVID-19, that event was rescheduled to July 25-29, 2021.) “Butane and propane were both involved in my accident. Those and seven other products go into the makeup of gasoline and I controlled the flow of the various products into the gasoline. On this day, I was changing out a hammer blank on a manifold, a routine job involving relieving excess chemical between pipelines.” Unfortunately, on this day, leaking valves resulted in him being covered in liquid and vapors. While making his way to a safety shower, he had forgotten that he had left his truck running, and as he passed it, the chemical vapors traveled to the truck, which exploded and engulfed him and the refinery in flames.

“What followed was five years in and out of the hospital with third-degree burns over 50% of my body,” Morecraft said. “I had over 50 orthopedic and plastic surgeries and other medical treatments. I still have surgeries and medical procedures to this day.” He soon came to learn the toll from the accident would not only affect him in an extremely negative way, but that there would be a toll on his entire family, a situation he came to regret even more than the painful burns on his body. As the years passed, alcoholism, depression, two suicide attempts, and a divorce were all challenges he faced in his life. “It was all my fault,” he said. “In addition, I feel responsible for challenges my daughters faced in their lives with alcohol and drugs. For those five years I was in and out of the hospital so much, I was not much of an authority figure in their young lives.” Sadly, years later, in October 2013, one of his daughters died of bronchitis after seven years of sobriety. “Her body was too damaged at that point to fight it off.” Morecraft remains haunted by the question of whether his daughter would be alive today if he had not suffered the accident back at Exxon in 1980.

A DECISION TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Nearly seven years had passed since the accident and Morecraft was back to work at Exxon in a new role as a union

safety coordinator. Having been through all that he had, he was often irritated by the employees who slept through safety meetings and took the same lax attitude toward protective safety glasses and clothing that he once did. "One day, I was frustrated with three guys who just refused to wear their safety helmets," he said. "Instead of my usual admonishments that were clearly not working with these guys, I was very frustrated. And one of the guys snapped back at me, 'Charlie, you never gave a damn about safety and you don't today!'" At that point, I was mad and had those three guys sit down and I told them my entire story of the accident—the horrors of the screaming in the hospital by all of the burn victims going through excruciating pain, the depression, the alcoholism, the effects of the entire experience on my wife and daughters, including the drug and alcohol abuse of my daughters." After the story, all three of the employees walked away wearing their safety helmets. He will always remember that one of the employees, Eddie, turned around and said, "Charlie, you ought to tell that story to everybody!"

That night, after telling his story to the three employees, was the first night he slept through the night without a nightmare. "I think that after the endless trauma of the accident and everything that followed in the fallout, I felt a sense of purpose that my story had an impact on these employees," he said. "This began a next phase of my life that continues to this day—sharing my story to change a culture of machoism and neglect." After disappearing for a few days, Morecraft found himself at Yosemite National Park. In awe of the view at Glacier Point, he cried and reflected on how he could move forward, taking responsibility for his own life while helping to guide others to take responsibility for their lives.

TAKING A POWERFUL STORY TO THE MASSES

The decision to make a difference changed life dramatically for Morecraft. He has traveled throughout the United States and the world speaking to audiences of all sizes. "I've been to Russia, Kuwait, and throughout the Middle East," he said. "I've been to Siberia, Europe, and many, many more countries. Despite all the stark differences in culture, religious belief, and way of life, all people have some universal characteristics. They want to come home from work, watch TV, have a beverage, and enjoy life with their family." With his video now available in 38 languages, Morecraft believes his message of taking safety seriously for the good of the entire family resonates with his audiences. "Who has ever changed their behaviors because someone gave them a 'Work Safe' T-shirt?" he asked. "And believe me, they don't care what their CEO says or thinks. But, a story about the devastating effects of being severely burned and the effects this can have on their family gets their attention.

"I have had over 200 grown men, big macho men, faint during my presentation over the years," Morecraft said. "Children and women actually hold up better than the men, and I believe it is because the men are often more likely to be working in these industrial situations and ignoring the safety protocol. I've had men tell me they relate because they see themselves in my position, but the accident simply has not happened yet. They are overcome by the sense that they are vulnerable unless they make a change and make it now!"

While Morecraft always tells the story of the accident, another account from his first year on the job is also frequently told. This one is about a major ammonia leak that caused him to put on respiratory equipment. "What are you doing? Going swimming?" a superior asked. Morecraft took off the respiratory equipment and joined the others who went to take care of the leak without safety wear. "The whole way back, we held our breath while inhaling fumes. It caused me to gag and vomit," he said. The superior simply said, "Good job, kid." Morecraft tells this story to illustrate the peer pressure that often exists to neglect safety protocol. "Honestly, I didn't wear the safety glasses because I didn't think I looked good or cool wearing them. I worried what others thought," he said. "That set me up for a life of horrible problems, and for what? Concern that I wouldn't look cool enough in safety glasses!"

"WHAT MAKES YOU THINK YOU ARE DIFFERENT?"

A frequent question Morecraft asks in his presentation is, "What makes you think you are different?" He believes that everyone who fails to wear the protective gear, takes shortcuts around safety rules, or flat out ignores safety guidelines is setting themselves up for an accident like his. "What makes you think you are different?" he asks his audience. "Why is this never going to happen to you?" He tells his audiences about the details of treatments that are severely painful. "There is a process of peeling off dead skin so that there is a fresh, clean area for skin grafts," he said. "When you come out of the tank, the air hits nerve endings and causes an excruciating level of pain. I grew up a tough kid who never thought he would scream or cry. That all changed fast with burn treatments. It is horrible to go through it. I used to try to strategically time my morphine treatments to cause the least pain, but it was always terribly painful. It was painful to hear others scream as well." Morecraft wants people to know the horrors they could face by taking risks. This then ties to the story that he considers worse: the story of how his family was affected.

In addition to speaking to large groups, Morecraft has been a frequent visitor to burn treatment facilities to offer moral support to others going through what he has gone through. "It never gets easier. For these people, they think their lives are ruined," he said. "Young women and young men think they will never be attractive to the opposite sex again. Life as they know it is over. There is so much they are not sure they will be able to ever do again. I can relate, having been through this."

ACCIDENTS HAPPEN IN MANY FORMS, AT WORK AND HOME

Morecraft points out that accidents he talks about are not all like his. "My accident is just my story. Accidents can happen at work, during travel, at home, and about anywhere else," he explained. "I talk to young people about using cell phones and texting while driving. So many young lives are lost each

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GENERATORS REQUIRE A COMPLETE PACKAGE OF PRODUCTS, SERVICES

STEVE RELYEA

There has been a surge of interest in propane-fueled standby generators as the price has decreased, consumer awareness has increased, and more homeowners have experienced electrical power outages. To ensure these new customers are satisfied with their purchase in the long run, they should be made aware that the generator is part of a complete package of products and services.

"Some of the people who have been jumping into the standby generator business focus on the sale of the generator and say, 'You'll never notice a loss of electricity. It will be easy. Sign here,'" says Josh Simpson, vice president of marketing with Kamps Propane (Manteca, Calif.). "But the conversation should include, 'Let's find you a fuel supplier and make sure you understand what they can and can't do; if your location allows a large enough tank to supply fuel to the generator for a long enough time; and if you will receive deliveries in the amount and time you need to keep fueled.'"

"This is critical," says Armistead Mauck, vice president with Cherry Energy (Kinston, N.C.). "Propane is the fuel cell and the generator simply converts it to electricity. Propane is the genesis of the entire solution."

Putting together the complete package requires input from the retailer selling the generator, a licensed electrician, and a propane marketer—before the product is sold. Each component of the package should be understood by the consumer before the sale is made. Only then can the consumer make an informed decision that will result in a standby generator and associated equipment that are reliable, deliver the results the consumer expects, and ensure long-term satisfaction.

"We want to participate from the beginning so we can set expectations and have a conversation with the consumer about all the equipment that is required," Simpson says. "A propane generator is an ideal option, but the sellers have an obligation to guide the customer through the proper sales process so that they are satisfied with their purchase."

THE COMPLETE PACKAGE

Simpson, Mauck, and representatives of three manufacturers of standby generators shared with ***BPN*** their tips for selling and maintaining standby generators in a way that will ensure the product meets, and even exceeds, the customer's expectations.

Get involved in the process. Propane marketers can position themselves to be part of the process, right from the beginning. They can reach out to local dealers and electrical contractors and ask that they be included, before the sale. Then, as a team, they can promote generators, and one can install the unit and another will coordinate the tank and piping. "Propane marketers can work with an electrical contractor to do the other half of a generator installation," says Sandoval da Silva, senior director of marketing and international sales, Briggs & Stratton Global Standby and Job Site Products Group. "It's another application propane marketers can promote. We can provide sell sheets and other collateral assets."



Briggs & Stratton

Bring others into the process. If a consumer comes to the propane marketer first, asking about standby generators, the marketer can bring the other professionals into that conversation. "Touch base with a manufacturer," suggests Melanie Tydrich, senior channel manager, Kohler. "We make sure we have dealers and installers in place to take care of the customer. They will work with the customer to determine the size of the unit, whether they want to run the whole house or only desire to power a few select items, and then do the installation."

Recommend retailers and installers that are local. A surge of interest in standby generators from residents of California has "created a gold rush for fly-by-night operators who are attempting to cash



"A propane generator is an ideal option, but the sellers have an obligation to guide the customer through the proper sales process so that they are satisfied with their purchase."

—Josh Simpson
Kamps Propane

in on the demand," Simpson reports. He explains that outsiders come into the state's rural communities and try to close the sale on the first meeting, without the propane marketer being involved. This creates scenarios in which the fuel situation may not meet the customer's expectations. "We encourage residents to do business with local suppliers," Simpson says. "We work with local electricians and do this as a coordinated process, because they know us and we know them."

Develop a one-stop shop. Propane marketers need to be the comprehensive solution provider. When customers buy a generator from a propane marketer, they will later call the company when the unit requires service. Cherry Energy sells generators and provides the fuel, and has preferred electricians it works with to provide installation. "Propane marketers need to give the process 'one-button' simplicity," Mauck says. "The entire installation process needs to be orchestrated before the consumer walks in the door. They want a solution and not part of a solution."

Offer a service contract. Both the electrical contractor and the propane marketer can provide a maintenance contract to ensure the standby generator works when needed. "There are additional revenue opportunities once the generator is installed," says Jake Thomas, director of global service operations, Generac Power Systems. "Everyone should have a yearly maintenance contract. That will provide recurring revenue over the life of the generator."

Maintain the generator. "This is probably the No. 1 area needing improvement," Mauck says. "Marketers need to train techs to properly maintain this equipment." Cherry Energy is working with a community college to develop training for technicians. The college has installed three Generac units in its Energy Distribution Lab for hands-on training. Mauck added that today's monitoring solutions mean customers don't have to make the call for service, because their generator or hot water heater will. Just as with forecasted deliveries of propane, the customer can entrust the propane marketer with servicing the generator. "Marketers need to exploit available technology like Generac's Mobile Link web-based monitoring," Mauck says. "This type of solution makes the marketer look like a true professional, reporting service intervals and unit status. Nothing is worse than the generator that is ignored until it is needed and then does not work."

Specify the right size tank. "As a propane supplier, we want them to have a tank large enough for a seven-day [fuel supply for] the generator," says Simpson. "If they call and say they need propane in the next few days, we want to deliver enough for a week."



"Propane is the fuel cell and the generator simply converts it to electricity. Propane is the genesis of the entire solution."

—Armistead Mauck
Cherry Energy

Use tank monitors. The availability of tank monitors has increased the ability of standby generator owners and service providers to keep an eye on the fuel supply. "We partner with Tank Utility," says Jake Thomas of Generac. "We promote that to the consumer so that the consumer can know if they have fuel."

Sell other propane appliances. When customers have more propane appliances, they enjoy many benefits. For one, they



"Everyone should have a yearly maintenance contract. That will provide recurring revenue over the life of the generator."

—Jake Thomas
Generac

can eliminate the tank rent they would pay on a generator tank. Cherry Energy offers generator tanks, but suggests adding appliances that will consume more propane and eliminate that charge. "You can pay tank rent for when you do need it, or we can provide a better solution that will save you money and provide a better experience," Mauck says. Customers will also enjoy the efficiencies and comfort provided by a gas dryer, cooktop, water heater, and space heater. With a gas grill fueled by a tank, they won't have to run to a convenience store to trade a 20-lb. cylinder. A third benefit is, they can reduce the electrical load of their home. This allows them to buy a smaller, less expensive generator. "We tell the customer, 'Let's get your generator as small as it can be,'" Mauck says. "We can do that by getting as many propane appliances as we can."

Communicate proactively. "Watch the news and the weather and be proactive," Thomas suggests. "If a power shutdown or a hurricane is on the way, reach out to consumers and ask if they want you to fill up their tank. It's better to have an incremental sale now than an emergency call later." Conversely, train consumers to be proactive, too; ask them to let you know when they add equipment, like a generator, that will increase their consumption of propane.

Manage expectations. "Before they buy, consumers should initiate a conversation with a fuel supplier to see if its fueling capabilities meet their expectations for the generator," says Simpson. "People see standby generators as an insurance policy against the loss of electricity, so they need a continuous supply of fuel. The challenge is to make sure the customer understands how much fuel they need, where they will get it, and under what terms. The propane marketer's service is key to customer satisfaction."

Have your own standby power. Cherry Energy's bulk plant and its main office are equipped with standby generators. When the power is out, that means they can keep servicing customers. When the power is not out, they are setting an example for customers to follow, by being prepared. "Marketers need to position their own operations with standby power so they can load trucks during times of natural disasters," Mauck says. "This needs to be the example that convinces the customer that we prescribe ourselves the same medicine. Otherwise, the customer will say, 'If you don't have a generator, why would I buy one?'"

Be prepared to say no. If a potential customer doesn't fit the propane marketer's business model, or cannot be supplied in a way that will meet the expectations they have for their generator, the marketer should have an answer prepared. Simpson explains that Kamps Propane's service fee for putting in a tank is associated with a certain throughput. If all the other appliances in a home are powered by electricity, and there is no loss of electricity during the year, they will not use enough propane. "We can't afford to deploy our tanks for customers who will not consume fuel," he notes. "We train our people how to talk about this, especially when the answer is no, so they can communicate why."

GROWING DEMAND

The demand for standby generators has been increasing nationwide, the three aforementioned manufacturers reported. Demand has surged in California, a state where there was little demand previously. Growth is seen in states that already had been good markets.

One reason is the increasing number of power outages. "Sales have been driven by storms and generalized power outages in the Southeast, and fires and planned shutoffs in California," da Silva says. "That is new; California hasn't traditionally been a market."

Another is rising product awareness. "Not so long ago, people didn't know standby generators existed," Thomas says. "Now, through word of mouth, they know."

A third reason is falling prices. "Across the board, costs have decreased compared to 10 years ago," Tydrich says. She attributes that to the economy of scale, due to the increasing sales, as well as new manufacturing techniques.

"We are in a new era," Mauck says. "We have the threat of loss of power due to the fickle power grid, natural disasters, or terrorist acts. Here in North Carolina, we are in the hurricane belt, and we have had times when we've gone two or three weeks without power. The generator is a large part of the energy independence equation."

Also boosting the appeal of standby generators is the availability of monitoring and power management.

Briggs & Stratton's InfoHub wireless generator monitoring can send the customer alerts about generator status and maintenance reminders. It can also send maintenance alerts to the service dealer. "Once a week, the generator turns itself on to

perform a diagnostic and then shuts itself off, so you know it will perform when needed," da Silva explains. "That can be monitored. It provides peace of mind for the customer and the installer."

Kohler's OnCue Generator Management System lets the customer know that the generator is working and that it's ready when needed. "You can check from your phone or computer to see if there have been any events and you can receive alerts if the generator turns on or if anything goes wrong," Tydrich says. "Your service provider will be notified, too."

Generac's Mobile Link provides current operating status, maintenance schedule, and other information. "We send a message regarding maintenance or faults," Thomas says. "We provide proactive notification of problems."

Another available feature is power management. This enables customers to specify which appliances they want the generator to power during an outage, and which are less important. That way, a smaller, less expensive generator can be used, while still powering the appliances they want.

Generac's Smart Management Modules manage power loads and help lower installation costs. "Smart Management Modules manage what power goes to what appliance," Thomas explains. "It can turn off one to power another. This allows the customer to reduce the size of the generator and cut the acquisition cost in half. It's invisible to the consumer; it will seem like whole-house coverage."



"We make sure we have dealers and installers in place to take care of the customer. They will work with the customer to determine the size of the unit, whether they want to run the whole house or only desire to power a few select items, and then do the installation."

—Melanie Tydrich Kohler



"Propane marketers can work with an electrical contractor to do the other half of a generator installation. It's another application propane marketers can promote."

—Sandoval da Silva Briggs & Stratton

Kohler offers a Load Shed Kit that allows the use of a smaller generator set. "Load shedding prioritizes circuits, and turns off less critical items automatically when more essential appliances are running," Tydrich explains. "The customer can also work with a professional and decide if they want to run the whole house or if they only care about a few select items."

Briggs & Stratton offers its Symphony II Power Management System and says it lets the customer purchase a smaller, more affordable home generator system while maintaining the comfort of whole-house backup power. "The customer can specify, 'I want these things to work, but not the air conditioning.' It automatically decides what to power based on the priorities you set," da Silva says.

The propane retailer or electrical contractor should present these options to the consumer before the purchase. That way, the consumer will know what to expect. This is another part of the complete package required for a standby generator.

"We need coordination. This has ramped up so quickly, the participants need to work together," Simpson concludes. "We want to provide a solution that will meet the consumer's goals. We want to help them and make them feel that their local propane supplier is a source of great comfort and security." ■

INTRODUCING THE PROPANE INDUSTRY'S 30 UNDER 30

Thirty young propane professionals, who were nominated by others in the industry, have been selected as Charter Members of the Young Gassers' 30 Under 30 Program. Each of these young adults will receive a variety of assignments, perks, and recognition within the propane industry for their participation.

This is the inaugural year of the 30 Under 30 Program. Created by the International Association of Young Gassers in conjunction with the National Propane Gas Association (NPGA) and the Canadian Propane Association (CPA), the program is meant in invest in, engage, and encourage young professionals working for companies directly involved in the propane gas industry.

Following is a brief description, as provided to ***BPN***, of 15 inaugural members of 30 Under 30. The other 15 were introduced in the April issue.



Travis Hagen

Emergency Response Assistance Canada
Calgary, Alta.

Travis Hagen had his start in the field as a tank truck repair technician at the age of 18, at National Energy Equipment. He recounts, I conducted inspections under the B620 regulation. I performed repairs, modifications, and fabrication of tank trucks. From National Energy, I was picked up by Euroway Industrial Services at the age of 22. At Euroway, I was an apprentice welder, as well as a fabricator and tank truck technician. When I joined the Euroway team, I was asked if I would like to work on the dangerous goods response team. After three months I was promoted to team lead of the response team. I spent five years as a welder/fabricator and tank truck tech with Euroway, as well as a dangerous goods response team leader. From Euroway I moved on to CN Rail as a dangerous goods officer, first for Alberta, Canada, then to Saskatchewan, Canada. From CN Rail I have moved to Emergency Response Assistance Canada as a home base coordinator and technical advisor.

He has responded to more than 50 LPG rail incidents, over 80 LPG tank truck incidents, and more than 30 stationary tank incidents involving transfers, repairs, leak mitigation, and fire suppression.



Raleigh Garrett

G&S Gas Service Inc.
Milledgeville, Ga.

Raleigh Garrett is the vice president of G&S Gas Service Inc. in Milledgeville, Ga. Upon graduating from the University of Georgia with a degree in finance, Raleigh joined G&S Gas after working as a traveling consultant for a year. He's been with G&S Gas for seven years and is a third-generation member of the family business. He currently lives in Athens, Ga. with his wife, Anna Lynn.



Daniel Guglielmo

Paraco
Mt. Vernon, N.Y.

Daniel Guglielmo started working at Paraco when he was 16, sorting BBQ tanks and conducting yard maintenance during summer breaks at our Mt. Vernon, N.Y. facility. He says, although it was physically demanding, I quickly fell in love with the fast-paced work environment, and my co-workers whom I now consider family. At 18, I started

to work on the loading dock while attending college. As soon as I turned 21, the minimum legal age required to be a hazmat driver, I got my CDL and hazmat endorsement. For the next few years, I would deliver cylinders full-time Wednesday through Sunday, and attend full-time undergraduate classes Monday and Tuesday. Finally, after graduating from college, I was given the opportunity to take a new role as the workforce manager for our customer experience department. I get to work with the best team every day, and together we turned the customer experience department into an efficient, customer-centric operation that is always looking to improve. Right now, I am attending graduate courses at night with a concentration in information systems, so I can add more value to our team. At 26, I am very fortunate to have already put in 10 years with a great company like Paraco, and look forward to a long career.



Trae Boese
Global Gas
Denver, Colo.

Trae Boese was first introduced to the propane industry as a teenager, when he worked in the yard painting and power-washing tanks during the summer at a retail location in Kansas. While he didn't know it at the time, this would be the first stepping stone towards a career in the propane industry. During his senior year of college, he interned with Global Gas. These experiences would make a natural fit for Trae when he rejoined Global Gas shortly after finishing college.

Trae attended Ottawa University in Ottawa, Kan., where he earned his Bachelor of Arts in accounting and business administration. He has been with Global Gas for three years, starting in its accounting department and is now currently the Northeast sales representative. The opportunity to learn and build relationships is what he enjoys the most about being in the propane industry. In college, he worked at Applebee's for two years, where he gained valuable customer relations experience.



Matt Silk
Jennings Oil & Propane
Danbury, Conn.

Matt Silk says, although brief, his experience in the propane industry has been rewarding. Following my graduation from the University of Connecticut in 2015 I began helping out the Jennings during busy winters to supplement my woodworking job and found that the trades were a better fit for me than office work. I've always been mechanically inclined and enjoy working with my hands. There's always an ongoing project in my life, whether it's a car or motorcycle. I love learning how things work. Appliance installation and maintenance, as well as piping installations, offer a satisfying challenge. Field work also drew me toward propane. Operating the crane or excavator to set tanks is enormously more exciting to me than sitting at a desk.

He began his career as an oil delivery driver for Jennings Oil and is currently working his way through the propane aspect of the industry, as both a delivery driver and technician. He explains, I'm eager to learn all I can about the fuel business and feel I am moving up steadily. There's plenty of work to keep me busy and I'm excited to see how the industry evolves as time moves on.



Elliott Shaffer
Shaffer's Bottles Gas
Hooversville, Pa.

Elliott Shaffer is proud to represent the fifth generation of a family business that began in Hooversville, Pa. in 1901. He attended the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown and currently is employed as plant manager of Shaffer's Bottled Gas. Elliott and his wife, Sally, live in Hooversville. He enjoys working with his dad, Jeff Shaffer, and intends to emulate his father's leadership and compassion for others.



Denver VanderYacht
VanderYacht Propane
Lynden, Wash.

Denver VanderYacht grew up in the propane industry. His parents, Bryan and Mary VanderYacht, started VanderYacht Propane in 1989. Denver was born in 1994, and ever since he can remember he was helping his mom and dad around the office. Full-time employment started in 2016. Denver graduated from high school in 2012, then furthered his education at Washington State University. During

college he still managed to work for VanderYacht Propane. When he was home in the summer, he would help out in the service department or drive a bobtail. After graduating in 2017 he hit the ground running. First starting in the bobtail delivering propane and not long after he was placed in a service truck. Now Denver is the sales and marketing manager for VanderYacht Propane. The first-hand contact with the customers and helping them out each day is what he loves. He enjoys building those relationships with customers, making sure they are better off each time he hangs up the phone, or when he leaves the customer's location. In his spare time, you will see Denver spending time with his wife Miranda; his two sons, Calvin (2), and Kruze (5 months); and his Labrador, Stanley.



Brad Plissey

JaySan Gas
East Freetown, Mass.

Brad Plissey started working at JaySan Gas at the age of 16 as an autogas fleet maintenance mechanic while enrolled in a local vocational technical high school. Upon graduation, Brad chose to enter the propane trade as an alternative to a college degree. He learned other roles within the industry, including tank maintenance, tank setting, gas fitting, appliance service, and propane delivery, becoming a versatile member of the JaySan team. Brad is currently an apprentice to a Master Gasfitter and received his intrastate Class A CDL with all endorsements at the age of 19. Most days he drives a bobtail delivering to residential, commercial, and agricultural locations and is transitioning to replace a retiring long-term Class A transport driver. Beyond work, Brad is an on-call member of his hometown fire department with his Firefighter 1 and 2 certifications, is in process for his EMT license, as well as having completed the propane emergency response training through PGANE and the Massachusetts Fire Academy. Brad is 19 years old and lives in his hometown of Freetown, Mass. with his dog, Jesse James, a Belgian Malinois.



Kendall Hostler

Central Valley Ag
Beloit, Kan.

Kendall Hostler was raised on a central Nebraska farm and graduated from Fort Hays State University. After graduation, she moved to Beloit, Kan., where she worked as an energy customer service specialist at Farmway Co-op. Her duties included, but were not limited to, propane contract development and implementation, wholesale and commercial refined fuels and propane bidding, customer service, and receiving and invoicing of all energy-related products and services.

Today she is the business support specialist for the energy division at Central Valley Ag (CVA). In her new role, she is crucial in development and data services for the energy operating system. Kendall trains location personnel in three states and is a member of the CVA Energy Leadership Team. She has a two-year-old daughter, Landri.

Ryan Wine is the fourth generation involved in his family-owned and -operated propane business, E.P. Wine Inc. His journey in the industry began in high school during his summer breaks, when he would refurbish tanks the old-fashioned way, with a scraper and paint



Ryan Wine

E.P. Wine Inc.
Barre, Mass.

brush. While attending Merrimack College, Ryan juggled between helping out at E.P. Wine and playing college soccer at a high level.

After graduating from Merrimack College in 2017, Ryan started full time, driving bobtails and making deliveries. He was also a crucial part of getting his company online with a website and social media pages.

Today Ryan is much more involved with the service side of the business, learning more about propane equipment each day. He is a jack of all trades within the company, able to help out driving, servicing equipment, answering phones, and managing the company's online presence.



Austin Dodge

Woodfin Propane Inc.
Richmond, Va.

Austin Dodge is the current operations manager for Woodfin Propane

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Inc. (Richmond, Va.). After graduating from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2015 with a degree in Finance, he began his career at Woodfin Propane, a local petroleum company, where he assumed a number of job functions from bobtail driving, to overseeing operations at company-owned convenience stores, to maintenance on the company fleet of fueloil and propane delivery vehicles. In his three years in the propane industry, he has helped drive Woodfin from a start up to a solid player in the central Virginia LP market. Daily job functions include regulatory compliance, permitting, scheduling, inventory, and installing LP systems. His goal for the immediate future is to continue to foster growth within the propane market while maintaining outstanding customer relations and compliance within the industry.



Drake VanderYacht

VanderYacht Propane
Lynden, Wash.

Drake VanderYacht was born in March of 1995. His parents, Bryan and Mary VanderYacht, started VanderYacht Propane in 1989. Since he can remember he has always been a part of the company, whether it was going up to the RV parks in the hills and reading tanks during Christmas break as a kid or driving around and pressure-washing propane tanks during the summer months. Drake always knew he wanted to work for his parents, but also wanted to venture out and work for someone besides his parents to get a different view on things. In 2014 he applied to work at Roche Harbor Resort on San Juan Island, Wash., where he was in charge of placing boats and yachts in slips as they came into the harbor. This job quickly grew into a management role, where it helped him develop great communication, organization, and management skills. Drake is currently driving a bobtail for his parents' company, but is working into more of the dispatching, property mangement, and sales side of things. He is excited to start getting more involved and can't wait to see what the future years have to bring. In his spare time he enjoys spending time with friends and family especially his nephews, Calvin (2), and Kruze (5 months).



Scott Dougherty

Superior Energy Systems
Elyria, Ohio

Scott Dougherty has been with Superior Energy Systems (SES) for seven years, beginning his career with SES while still in high school. Initially, he was hired to sell 20- to 100-lb cylinders. As his industry knowledge and education base grew, he was promoted to draftsman and now works as a sales engineer. Scott takes the lead on multiple sales opportunities simultaneously, and works directly with customers to ensure success. He is currently working on his senior project, which includes new computer-based programming for midstream terminal operations.

Scott enjoys working in various facets of the NGL industry, including midstream, industrial and autogas. Some of his accomplishments at SES include leading the CSA/UL, Measurement Canada, and NTEP processes for certifying SES' full autogas dispenser line; coordinating large autogas infrastructure plans for fleets; and initiating 3D, CAD modeling techniques for more advanced design drawings for midstream and autogas installations.

Prior to college, Scott achieved Eagle Scout status with the Boy Scouts of America. Scott will graduate from Cleveland State University in May with a degree in electronics engineering technology and continue his career with SES.



Cody Reeves

RegO
Elon, N.C.

Cody Reeves entered the propane industry more than 12 years ago as an apprentice. with a propane marketer under a work study program.

He obtained his journeyman license to work on gas systems in the state of Connecticut at the Mitchell Oil Co. shortly thereafter. He continued to pursue and obtain his contractor's license for the state of Connecticut at Durkin Propane. While at Durkin Propane he assisted the startup of a new propane retailer where they encouraged safety and training. It didn't take long for Cody to discover his passion for creating a safety culture. After moving, Cody began working for a major marketer, Superior Plus Propane, where he encountered a team of safety professionals that had encouraged the need for training professionals in the industry. Cody, his wife and four children, have since relocated to North Carolina after he transitioned to the technical services specialist role at RegO in 2019.

He has since facilitated both regulator and distributor training for more than 400 people across the U.S. When not supporting RegO marketing and training efforts, you'll find him playing at the park with his wife and kids.



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Tanner DeWitt

Ed Staub & Sons
Boise, Idaho

Tanner DeWitt has been around the propane business his whole life. I am 3rd generation in the industry. I started in grade school painting and refurbing tanks as a summer job, and helping count inventory. After college, I worked for Ed Staub & Sons Propane as a yard guy, before moving to the construction side of the business, building cardlocks in Oregon and California for gas and diesel with a man named Gene Alvis. He helped me through this industry. I then started bulking oil at our main office in Klamath Falls, Ore., before transferring to our Nampa, Idaho plant. I helped building storages, then I drove part time til I got my own route. I began driving through the winter, then went into service at the start of 2015. I was trained by my now leaders, Rod Taylor and Bryce Clark. I've been a technician ever since and now am training upcoming technicians in the company with Rod Taylor. I have a beautiful family with my wife Karen and our two daughters, Boston, who is 4, and Harley, who is 8 months old.

SHOPPER'S MART



INDUSTRY CALENDAR

All events are subject to cancellation. Before making plans to attend an event, please contact the organizer.

2020

June 15— National Propane Gas Association (NPGA) Marketers Meeting via webinar, 11:00 a.m.-noon EDT

NPGA Board of Directors Meeting via webinar, 1 p.m.-3 p.m. EDT

Contact NPGA for information
(202) 466-7200; *npga.org*

June 23-25—North Dakota Propane Gas Association Annual Meeting and Convention, Roughriders Hotel, Medora. (701) 223-3370; *ndpropane.org/newsroom/events/annual-meeting-convention/*

June 24-26—Pennsylvania Propane Gas Association 2020 Annual Membership Meeting, location tba, (717) 441-6040; *papropane.com/meetings/annual-membership-meeting/*

July 8-9—West Virginia Propane Gas Association Summer Membership Meeting, Stonewall Resort, Roanoke. (703) 530-9772; *npga.org/event/wvpga-summer-membership-meeting/*

July 12-15—Virginia Propane Gas Association Summer Meeting, Hilton Virginia Beach Oceanfront, Virginia Beach. (804) 648-6299, ext. 1004; *propaneva.com/newsroom/events/2020-vapga-summer-meeting/*

July 13-15—2020 Kentucky Propane Gas Association Summer Convention, Dale Hollow State Resort Park, Burkesville, (502) 875-2686; *kypropane.org*

July 16-17—National Propane Gas Association Summer Benchmarking Council Meeting, Sheraton Inner Harbor, Baltimore. (202) 466-7200, ext. 335; *npga.org/organization/npga-events/*

July 21-22—PERC Council Meeting, Park Hyatt Beaver Creek, Beaver Creek, Colo. (202) 452-8975; *propane.com/newsroom/events/perc-council-meeting-3/*

July 23-25—2020 Crossroads Propane Expo & Conference, Austin Convention Center, Austin, Texas. (800) 325-7427; *txpropane.com/event-details/2020-crossroads-propane-expo-conference*

July 28-30— Great Lakes Propane Convention, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio Propane Gas Associations' Joint Summer Convention, JW Marriott Hotel, Grand Rapids, Mich. (317) 655-4444; *indianapropane.com/newsroom/events/great-lakes-propane-convention/*

Aug. 2-5—2020 Eastern Energy Expo, Mohegan Sun, Uncasville, Conn. (973) 467-1400; *easternenergyexpo.com*

Aug. 5-7—Pacific Propane Gas Association Annual Conference & Membership Meeting, Sunriver Resort, Sunriver, Ore. (844) 585-4940; *pacificpropane.org/newsroom/events/2020-annual-conference-membership-meeting/*

Aug. 12-13—Northeast Propane Show, DCU Center, Worcester, Mass. *leslie@pgane.org; northeastpropaneshow.com*

Aug. 13-15—Oil & Gas Africa, Sarit Expo Centre, Nairobi, Kenya. *feedback@expogr.com; expogr.com/kenyaoil/*

Sept. 8-10—Gastech Exhibition & Conference, Singapore EXPO, Singapore. *customerservices@gastechevent.com; gastechevent.com*

Sept. 13-15—National Propane Gas Association Fall TS&S Committee Meeting, Westin Cincinnati, Cincinnati. (202) 466-7200, ext. 335; *npga.org/organization/npga-events/*

Sept. 16—Michigan Propane Gas Association Propane Safety Awareness Day, Michigan State Capitol Lawn, Lansing. (517) 487-2021; *mipga.org/training-events/propane-safety-awareness-day*

Sept. 27-29—National Propane Gas Association Fall Board of Directors Meeting, Fort Lauderdale Marriott Harbor Beach Resort & Spa, Fort Lauderdale, Fla. (202) 466-7200; *npga.org/organization/npga-events/*

Sept. 30-Oct. 1—ACI European Bulk Liquid Storage Summit, location tba, Cartagena, Spain. *pxavier@acieu.net; wplgroup.com/aci/event/european-bulk-liquid-storage/*

Oct. 4-6—Manufactured Housing Institute 2020 Annual Meeting, Grand Hyatt Denver, Denver, Colo. *info@mfghome.org; manufacturedhousing.org/conferences-meetings/*

Oct. 14-15—Propane Gas Association of New England Annual Fall Meeting, AC Marriott, Portsmouth, N.H. (888) 445-1075; *pgane.org/newsroom/events/2020-summer-meeting/*

Nov. 2-4—33rd World LPG Forum, Dubai World Trade Center, Dubai. *association@wlpga.org; worldlpgforum2020.com*

For additional calendar items visit ***bpnews.com***

SUPPLY CONTINUED

Continued from **Page 35**



Darryl Rogers

end of 2020 and approaching 8.5 million barrels a day by the end of 2021.

Propane being a by-product of oil and gas production, its production will decrease by 200,000 or 300,000 barrels a day. The propane production will be relatively flat for the remainder of the year, though, because it will take time to drop.

“When upstream activity is halted, it takes months before we see a fall of production,” Rogers explained. “We won’t see that until 2021. Having said that, it will be down some in 2020 since refineries are shutting down because of reduced refinery production demand. Refinery propane is decreasing because there is less demand for refined product, like jet fuel, but that will come back.”

“Net-net, we expect a flat 2020 to slightly declining propane production. It’s a balance,” he added. “This leaves inventories in a relatively good condition for the rest of 2020.”

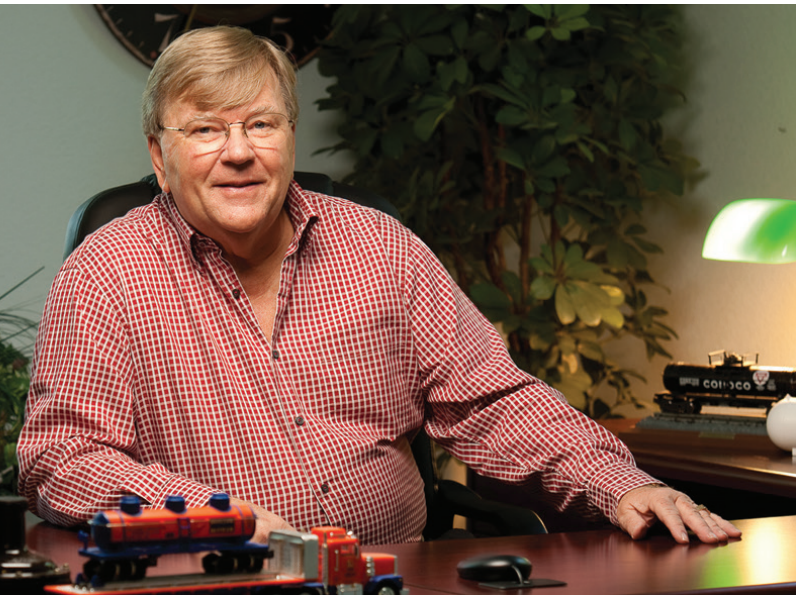
One thing to watch is exports. If chemical demand comes back and the arbitrage is such that the Asian market is willing to pay for propane, exports could rise while production remains lower.

Summing up, Rogers said, “In propane, there are low prices, but demand is off. How quickly will the demand markets come back? If they snap back, and there is less production, we could see the price rise. That is the key thing to watch.” ■



IS THE CORONAVIRUS A COVERED PERIL UNDER BUSINESS INCOME?

FRANK THOMPSON



Beginning the second week in March, the phones in our office started ringing with propane marketers calling to ask if they had any coverage under their Property Policy-Business Income if they were forced to close because of the governmental mandates ordering business to close because of COVID-19.

Later, we learned that energy business was considered essential business and could and should continue to operate. Therefore, marketers were forced to find ways to protect their own employees from the public as they continued to operate. In almost every instance, efforts to keep employees safe were less efficient and more costly, resulting in marketers looking for ways to offset their losses. So, they turned to their insurance policy to see if they had coverage.

> *"(...) the simple answer to the question, 'Do I have coverage caused by the COVID-19 virus under my business income?' is no. However, you need to continue reading."*

The questions were novel, a virus causing a loss of business income. Business Income is normally only triggered by a covered peril, such as a tornado, wind, hail, fire, lightning, etc.

To answer their questions, we immediately reviewed Property Policies with Business Income from many of the insurance companies and found that most use a standard ISO (Insurance Services Office) endorsement entitled Exclusion of Loss Due to Virus or Bacteria.

The exclusion is for Commercial Property and excludes the following:

a. "the exclusion covers property damage to buildings or personal property and all forms that Cover business income and extra expense or action of civil authority."

b. "We will not pay for loss or damage caused by or resulting from any virus, bacterium or other micro-organism that induces or is capable of inducing physical distress, illness, or disease."

The above exclusion has been on all Property policies that have Business Income since 2006. So, based on the above policy wording, the *simple* answer to the question, "Do I have coverage caused by the COVID-19 virus under my business income?" is *no*. However, you need to continue reading.

The magnitude of the business closures were not well known at the beginning of March. Today, as this is being written a month later, the federal government is now estimating that more than 30 million small businesses will be closed or drastically affected by the coronavirus.

The result is that Congress and many state governors are trying to pass legislation that would force the insurance companies to pay Business Income and Extra Expense losses caused by governmental action.

If forced to pay the Business Income losses, it is estimated that the insurance companies would pay out between $220 billion to $382 billion dollars *per month*, exhausting all of their surplus to write property and casualty insurance within two months.

So what should a marketer do if they feel like they have a Business Income claim? We recommend that you turn in a claim to your insurance carrier. The claim would require a normal 72-hour waiting period from the time the loss started, and should be detailed to show your losses. Let the insurance company decide if they are going to cover your claim or reject it.

We hope and pray you all stay healthy during these unsettling times.

Frank B. Thompson is a chartered property and casualty underwriter based in Phoenix. He is the owner of PT Risk Management, an independent insurance company specializing in writing propane and petroleum risk policies throughout the U.S.

Continued from **Page 18**

ployees and customers. Pandemic policies and procedures are critical to identify how employees will perform tasks during a pandemic and how employees will communicate these adjusted services and protocols to customers. Most importantly, pandemic policies and procedures are designed to help your company operate as efficiently and safely as possible under disruptive conditions.

TIPS TO HELP YOUR COMPANY DURING A PANDEMIC

Once your company has established pandemic policies and procedures to follow in order to provide your customers with essential services, like propane deliveries and emergency service, the next step is to consider measures that you can take to productively prepare for the next phase. Depending on your company's needs, this may include creative ways to stay in touch with your customers or prep your service team with skills to increase billable hours, including:

Pandemic Communications

In times of uncertainty, your customers are counting on you to keep them informed. Contact your customer base with messages of support, so that they know you are still available to them during these uncertain times. This serves to ensure that their immediate needs for fuel delivery or service can bet met, and will also help to maintain customer relationships while "normal" operations are on pause.

Social Distancing Service

What services can your company provide while following pandemic guidelines, like social distancing? Cathodic protection inspections are a seasonal service that can be performed with minimal customer contact and still generate revenue through billable hours.

Go Paperless

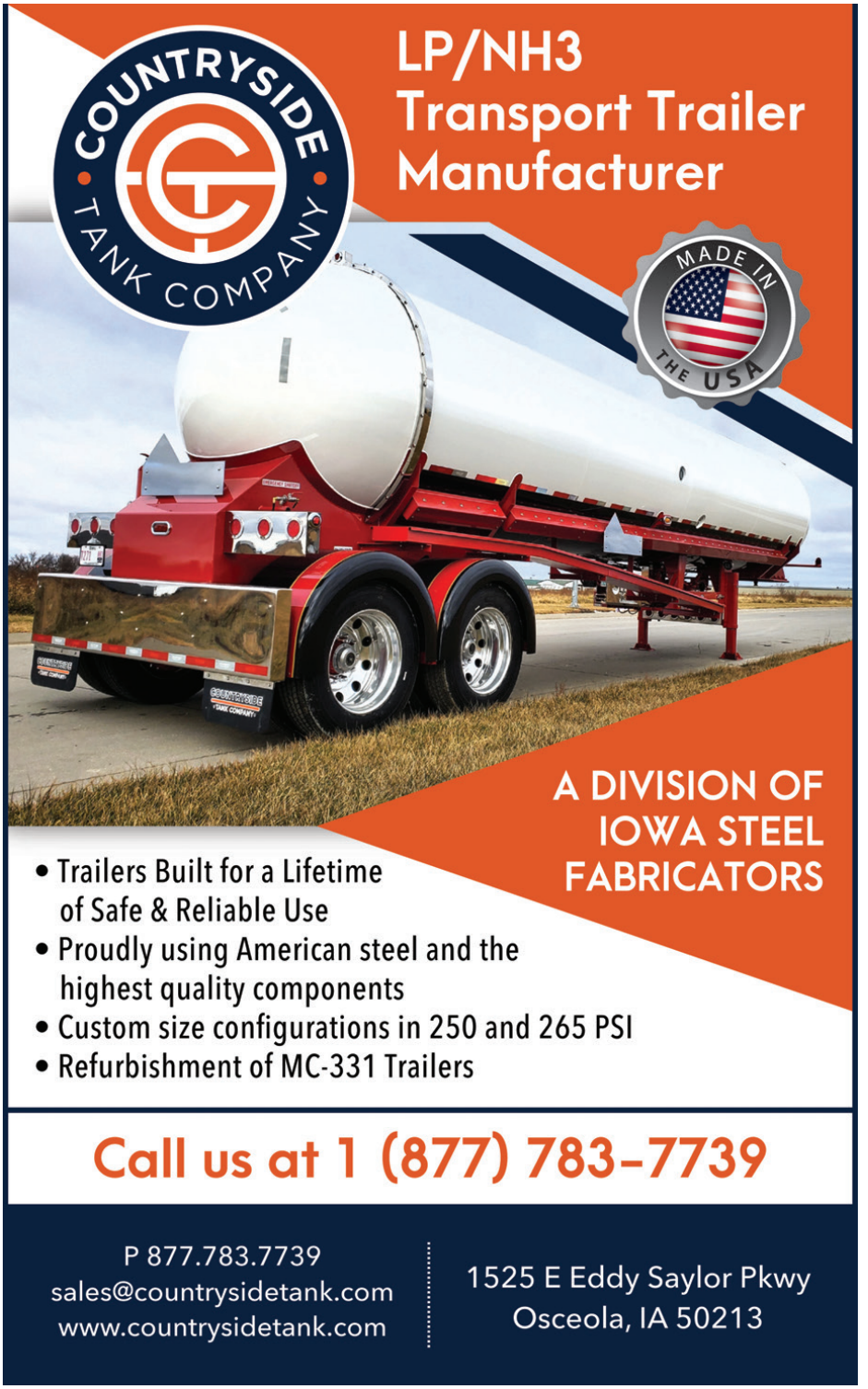
Help maintain social distancing between employees by using electronic forms rather than passing in paper safety inspections and related documentation in person.

Remote Training

While in-person training is on hold, remote learning is a great way to help your service team members continue to develop their skills and help your company stay compliant with employee training requirements.

We hope that this information can be a useful resource to help your propane company maintain compliance during these challenging circumstances. In order to extend our support, P3 Propane Safety is providing a free COVID-19 pandemic policy and procedure to propane marketers. Contact us to connect with a propane safety expert to receive a complimentary customized pandemic policy and procedure for your company.

Eric H. Leskinen, executive vice president of P3 Propane Safety, has over 30 years of experience with career progression from field operations to corporate direction. He has designed, managed, and executed safety training and compliance programs for multistate companies with up to 1100 employees.





SEAN CARR
RegO



ROB RAGLE
EDP



JOSE CARDENAS
EDP



MIKE WALLS
Red Seal Measurement Co.



SEAN PICOU
Quality Steel



JEFF BRUNNER
Cetane Associates

RegO (Elon, N.C.) has named **Sean Carr** to its Americas sales team. He will serve as northeast business development manager, with responsibility for growing existing markets and developing new market opportunities through distribution. Carr was most recently sales director for WTWH Media in Cleveland, Ohio. Previously, he was the publisher of LP Gas magazine.

Mike Walls has joined **Red Seal Measurement Co.** (Greenwood, S.C.) as its eastern regional sales manager. From his base in Atlanta, he will manage Red Seal Measurement's Refined Fuels and LPG business in the Eastern U.S., in addition to the eastern provinces of Canada. Walls has been involved with sales, business development, and marketing for the past 30 years. He previously worked for Red Seal Measurement.

Sean Picou, former director of operations for **Quality Steel** (Cleveland, Tenn.), was recently promoted to vice president of operations. Picou has more than 10 years of experience in the pressure vessel manufacturing business. He joined Quality Steel in 2013 when it acquired the assets of American Welding and Tank.

Jeff Brunner has joined **Cetane Associates** (Kent, Conn.) as a director and will support the activities of the firm's origination and deal execution teams. Brunner brings more than 25 years of leadership experience in the delivery of propane, distillates, and HVAC services. He most recently served as a regional vice president for Energy Distribution Partners, and has held vice president and director level positions at Inergy Propane, Petro-Star Gas, and HOP Energy.

Rob Ragle has joined **Energy Distribution Partners** (EDP: Chicago) as a new regional vice president, with responsibility for leading operations management teams to achieve service, quality, and operational efficiency metrics. He has been involved in the propane industry for more than 19 years, serving from general manager to division president, and has been part of a number of start-up/step-up operations.

Jose Cardenas has been named as EDP's marketing manager, where he will lead all marketing efforts. He formerly worked for one of the largest mechanical engineering firms in Chicago, updating its marketing efforts. Over the last 10 years, Cardenas has held marketing and design roles with ownership of the strategy and execution of integrated marketing plans that include building brand awareness, lead generation, and sales support.

Do you have a new product or personnel change you'd like to see in BPN?

Just send your press release and photo to

npeal@bpnews.com



James Robert (Jim) Ham Jr., vice president of operations at **Stoops Freightliner** (Fort Wayne, Ind.), passed away April 5 from complications of COVID-19. He was 66. He served the propane industry and NPGA in many capacities, most recently as the Services Section director on the NPGA Executive Committee. In addition, Mr. Ham was the chair of the Member Services committee, and volunteered his time and expertise as a member of the Services Section and Manufacturers Section, and the Technology, Standards and Safety (TS&S) committee. The Stoops team commented that "he will be remembered for having an unwavering drive to focus on the positive aspects of life."



Blue Cow Software (Lynnfield, Mass.) has hired three new staff members. **Amanda Fernandez** has joined the firm as a support specialist. **John Cardile**, who has a background in financial services and information technology, will serve as quality assurance engineer. **Amanda Burns**, newly named implementation specialist, will train and support new users of the company's Ignite software products.





MOBILIZING PROPANE

Continued from **Page 27**

In late 2018, Congress passed the FAA Authorization bill, launching a national conversation on methods and technologies to improve local and regional energy and power resilience and sustainability. California is specifically noted for wildland fire response and preparedness funding given the ongoing grid failures that have increasingly resulted from large-scale, devasting fires linked to climate change, earthquakes, and other natural disasters. However, the bill's funding also has national intent. As with PERC projects, projects receiving FAA or other federal funding are intended to provide a template for replicable projects capable of adapting to a broad array of resilience preparedness, response, or infrastructure-hardening requirements.

Our theoretical case study punches the right political and programmatic tickets and sets up long-term partnerships with disparate stakeholders moving in a common cause: state and local government; the federal government; electric vehicles; possible users of propane systems from school districts to hospitals and other health care providers, to construction and materials handling, to agriculture, and can function in a world of rural decentralization where propane is the dominant and preferred non-electrical energy source. Our theoretical project is both public and private, intrastate and interstate, touches all levels of government with industry crossover, and is based on consensus and coalition.

RESILIENCE AND RENEWABLE ARE THE FUTURE

Society has been moving toward a resilient, decentralized, internet-driven world for some time. It took the coronavirus to accelerate the apparent trends. These trends may forever shape the way we live, how we use energy, and how we conduct business. It will force us to examine many life-altering alternatives. The industries that seize these trends will be the sustainable ones. The others will fade into history—not overnight, but inevitably. People will be looking for clean energy, but also for the energy sources that are capable of evolving and adapting to societal needs—capable of meeting the needs of both natural and manmade disaster and health crisis—capable of providing the power we need when we need it—as we move toward greater a more decentralized world in the workplace and at home.

The propane industry has the chance to build on its natural constituencies, but it needs to mobilize to be able to seize these apparent and inevitable societal, energy, and business trends.

Its markets will provide its message; its partnerships will move those markets; its apparent and essential resilience will fuel its future.

Joe Colaneri is a partner at AJW Inc., a Washington, D.C.- and Sacramento, Calif.-based public policy and advocacy firm. He was previously executive director of the Propane Vehicle Council from 1996-2002.

SAFETY STORY

Continued from **Page 37**

year and for what? A message that can always wait just a few more minutes." He points out that young people often think they are invincible and that no injury or death will come to them. He has counseled families of burn victims. "Accidents in the home are often the worst. Children often get burned due to the negligence of the parents. I've seen incidents where a parent feels so guilty over the painful injury or death of a child that they later commit suicide."

"There are many injuries that take place in the home because people misjudge the power of fuel," Morecraft said. "Even turning on a gas grill can sometimes get people caught in the flash during ignition. Smoking near an ignition source is a big mistake too many people make. Having ignition sources too close to tiki torches at a party can cause a tragedy. Canisters with a small leak can cause vapors to escape from a hole. Abusing tanks in any way, like letting them bounce around too much in a truck, can cause an explosion. These are just some key negligent mistakes that end up causing serious injuries and death."

Today, Morecraft is remarried and semiretired. "I still go talk to groups about twice a month," he said. With much of the country grounded by the coronavirus as he spoke with ***BPN***, he pointed out that taking the precautions experts recommend is one more important step in daily life. "Washing your hands, social distancing, staying at home—all of the recommendations are so important," he said. "I'm getting close to the age group that is least likely to survive this virus." As a member of the board of directors of Vets Helping Heroes, he also has worked to raise money to provide service dogs for veterans who need them. There are dogs that simply provide comforts, dogs that can detect an imminent seizure with 10 minutes' notice, and seeing-eye dogs for the visually impaired.

Morecraft deeply regrets the August 1980 accident that caused so much physical and emotional pain, but he is pleased that his decision to make a difference in the lives of others has been so successful. "I can tell people to put on safety glasses, gloves, and flame-retardant wear; I can tell them to follow all sorts of safety guidelines, but people are naturally resistant to being given orders to do something they don't want to do," he said. "So, instead, I tell them my story and sincerely express my concern for their well-being and the well-being of their family. That message seems to resonate much better to make people take safety precautions seriously. I call my session 'Remember Charlie,' but not so they will remember me personally; I want them to remember what happened to me and take action to not let a similar incident happen to them!" ■

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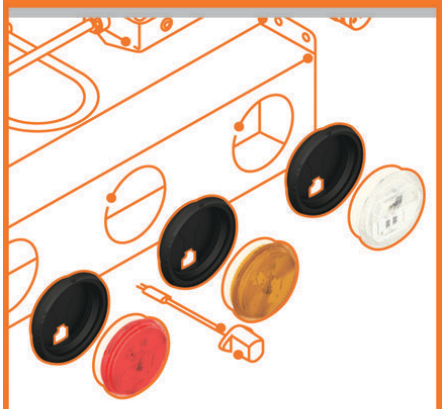
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A LEAP OF FAITH INTO A SUCCESSFUL CAREER IN PROPANE

KAREN MASSMAN VANASDALE

Like many Americans, several weeks ago Libby Byrns, a marketing and sales representative with Alliance Energy Services, a wholesale propane marketer located in North Kansas City, Mo., transitioned from sitting side-by-side her coworkers to working in her home office with her dogs, Freddy and Stanley, by her side. Although her work environment changed, her 24/7 availability and responsiveness to the needs of her customers remained unfaltering.

In her 13 years at Alliance, Byrns has built a personal portfolio with approximately 25 customers located primarily in the Midwest and annual sales of more than 60 million gallons of propane. This is an impressive accomplishment for anyone, but particularly for Byrns.

Thirteen years ago, at the age of 27, she took a brave leap of faith. After spending five years in an insurance and billing role in a chiropractor's office, she jumped into the propane industry when her friend and owner of Alliance, Jason Doyle, offered her a position.

"I was ready for a change and my finances were capped out. I could only move up so far. That was my main motivation."

With no prior experience in sales or knowledge of the energy field, the transition was difficult, but she was persistent and immersed herself into learning everything she could about propane and the needs of her customers.

"I knew nothing about propane. For the first six months, I questioned if it was the right decision for me. There were days I thought, 'Oh, my gosh, what have I done?' I'm glad I stuck with it."

As Alliance has quickly grown organically and through acquisitions, so has Byrns. Alliance is now a leading wholesale propane marketer shipping in the U.S. and Canada out of approximately 75 terminals. It supplies propane by rail, pipeline, cavern storage, refinery production, and fractionation facility production. Customers are offered product procurement, logistics assistance, and price risk management planning.

"You can truly learn something every day. It changes so fast," Byrns said.



Her customers and co-workers have become trusted allies acting in tandem to learn and solve problems. Of course, there are always challenges.

"I would say trying to get the retail customers to have enough storage is a challenge. In cold weather, to have more storage pays for itself 10 times over. Prices can change overnight. If they are going through a lot in a day and can't get supply to customers, that's a problem. "

As a woman in the propane industry, she has overcome some hurdles. "I would say being a woman can sometimes be an issue. You do have to prove yourself. I feel like I am talked to differently because I am a woman. There are extra steps a woman has to take because it's a male-dominated industry."

She added, "I am very detailed orientated, and I have good instincts so I believe these are things that have helped me gain the trust of my customers."

Byrns has also gained customers' trust by being a responsive partner. "It's a not a 9-5 job; it's a 24/7 job. I'm tied to my phone quite a bit. A carrier may call at 5 a.m. with a problem or in the winter a customer will call at 7 p.m. and need more gas."

Although she admits work-life balance can be difficult, since she doesn't have children or a lot of other responsibilities, the demanding position works for her. "I lead a pretty simple life, so having work keeping me busy is fine."

When she's not working, Byrns loves being outdoors walking and running with her dogs. She and her boyfriend enjoy fishing, mainly catching crappie and bass, and traveling to Florida once a year. Spending time with her family is also a priority. A native of Kansas City, she lives close to where she grew up, with her mother, father, and brother and his family nearby.

"I'm sure I'll stay with Alliance my whole career. I love the people I work with. We're like a family," Byrns said. "I don't know where Alliance will be as a company in 10 years, but I have no interest in moving." ■

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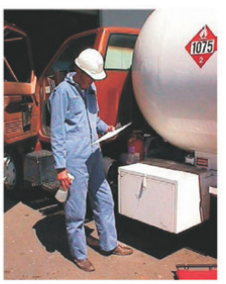
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