BUTANE-PROPANE NEWS

BPN

MARCH 2021



WHAT'S NEXT FOR AUTOGAS

The tech, policies and people pushing propane equipment into the mainstream

9 Tools to Improve the Reach of Your Bobtails

NEW SERIES: Crafting Your 2021 Selling Strategy



PROPANE education & research COUNCIL

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Discover everything you need to know about converting your fleet to propane autogas. Learn how to put the cost savings, operational advantages and lower emissions of autogas to work in your own operation.

Autogas Sales Series Overview NEW
It's not always what you know, it's who you know. Learn how to develop relationships with key partners and customers that are critical for success in the autogas market.

CETANE ASSOCIATES

Thank you to our 2020 clients

Dead River Company has acquired Fortier & Son Inc.

DCC Propane, LLC has acquired Saveway Petroleum, Inc., Northeast Oil & Propane, Uncas Gas

Paraco has acquired Advantage Propane

Tolino's Fuel Service, Inc. has acquired Fogel's Fuel Service LLC Propane • Oil

Casey Energy has acquired Marandola Fuel Service

Gault Family Companies has acquired Quinoco Energy Services

SailEnergy has acquired Hometowne Energy

Tower Energy has acquired Barrieau Oil Company

Santoro Oil — A Total Energy Company — has acquired Hometown Heating, LLC This Is Our Hometown Too..

Brideau Smarter Heating & Cooling has acquired Montuori Since 1926 Oil • Gas • Diesel

Rhoads Energy Family of Companies has acquired The Mack Services Group

Thank you to our clients who worked with us through the challenges 2020 brought to our industry. We appreciate your trust in us. We celebrate with you and thank you for working with us to complete eleven sell-side transactions, all involving propane. This success could not have been accomplished without your support and partnership.

Call 860.592.0089 ext. 8 for a confidential conversation.
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AN INTRODUCTION



Hope you are staying safe and healthy. As this issue of Butane-Propane News (BPN) went to print, a large portion of the United States was recovering from a period of freezing temps, excessive ice and snow, and — in some areas — mass power outages. February's failures in the electrical grid are a great example of the need propane fills in powering the U.S. and providing heat for many residents. It was also a great learning opportunity for me, your new editor, as I jumped headfirst into the energy industry.

Look for coverage of the Texas power outages — and how the propane industry stepped in to help — in our April issue. In the meantime, allow me to introduce myself and a few new members of the team. Last month, Cahaba Media Group, a B2B publisher headquartered in Birmingham, Alabama, announced the acquisition of BPN and added the brand to its portfolio of trade journals, which include Pumps & Systems, Construction Business Owner and HomeCare.

Throughout the acquisition process, I heard variations of the same sentiment over and over again: "This industry is like a big family." That sentiment is not lost on me. I come to you from working in the construction industry (previously managing editor of Construction Business Owner), where many of the relationships I have spent years building often felt like just that — family.

Publisher Natalie Peal has devoted her entire career to the stewardship of the BPN brand. It has a rich history of covering the propane industry, and much of its value is in the relationships BPN has built with its readers over the years. Along with Associate Editor Anjana Kallarackal, Account Executive Landen Franklin, Art Director Melanie Magee, and the rest of our team, I look forward to continuing to serve you with the content and resources you need to succeed.

In this issue, look for our feature covering some of the biggest trends in autogas. Learn more about the Cummins engine project; what you should know from PERC's comparative analysis of using propane versus electric power to lower the carbon footprint of trucks; and what's coming for Class 3 to 7 trucks. Here are a few other things you don't want to miss:

- 9 ways to improve the capabilities of your bobtails
- Conger LP Gas on crafting a unique selling strategy
- Why now is the time to update your employee handbook

Moving forward, we would love to know how we can be a better industry partner to you. Send us an email anytime:

- Editor Elizabeth Manning: emanning@cahabamedia.com
- Associate Editor Anjana Kallarackal: akallarackal@cahabamedia.com
- Account Executive Landen Franklin: lfranklin@cahabamedia.com

Below, find a note from Natalie reflecting on the transition of BPN — and make sure to look for a profile on her career, her father's propane legacy and more in our April issue.

Looking forward to getting to know you,
Elizabeth Manning

Thinking back 10 years ago or so, I remember discussing with BPN's former advertising sales manager, Kurt Ruhl, that the two of us had propane in our blood. We joked about how we had always been a part of a propane family, with his roots going back to Manchester Tank and mine to BPN. I know many of you have a similar family tree.

I guess that's why this Beyond the Mains is especially difficult for me to write. No matter how I look at it, the propane industry will always remain a major part of my life; in so many ways, it's made me who I am.

To BPN's extensive propane family, especially our advertisers and readers, I thank you for your support and being such an important part of the Clark family's lives. Your friendships have enriched our family more than you know. You will always hold a special place in my heart.

Now, after nearly 52 years as part of a family-held company, I'm excited to see where the Cahaba Media team will take BPN. I feel they share the same business ethics and customer service that we have held dear during our tenure. I'm certain they will continue to keep BPN's readers well-informed and treat its advertisers well — as has been the case since 1939.



Stay well,
Natalie Peal

BPN
BUTANE-PROPANE NEWS

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NPGA NATIONAL PROPANE GAS ASSOCIATION

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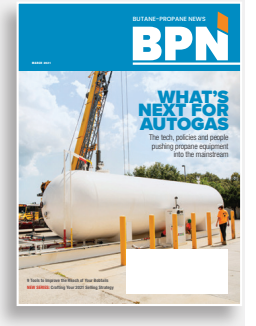

ON THE COVER

Pictured: Superior Energy Systems installs an 18,000-gallon propane tank and propane autogas station for Pinellas County Schools in St. Petersburg, Florida, in 2019.

Photo provided by the Propane Energy Resource Council.

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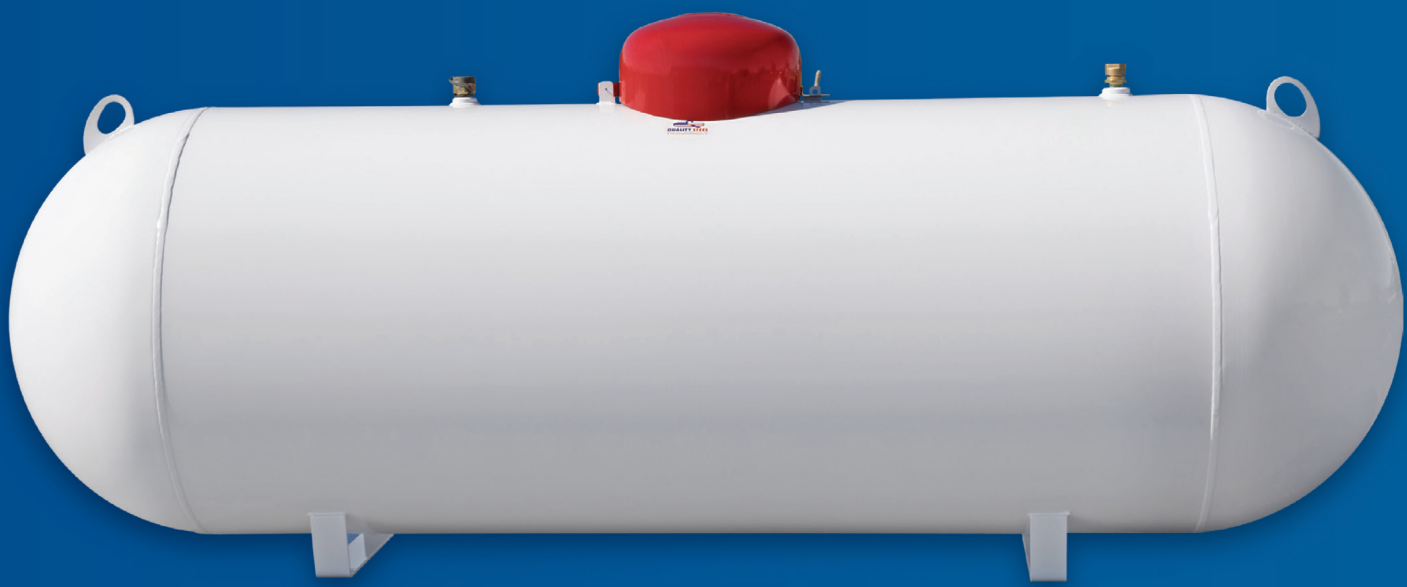

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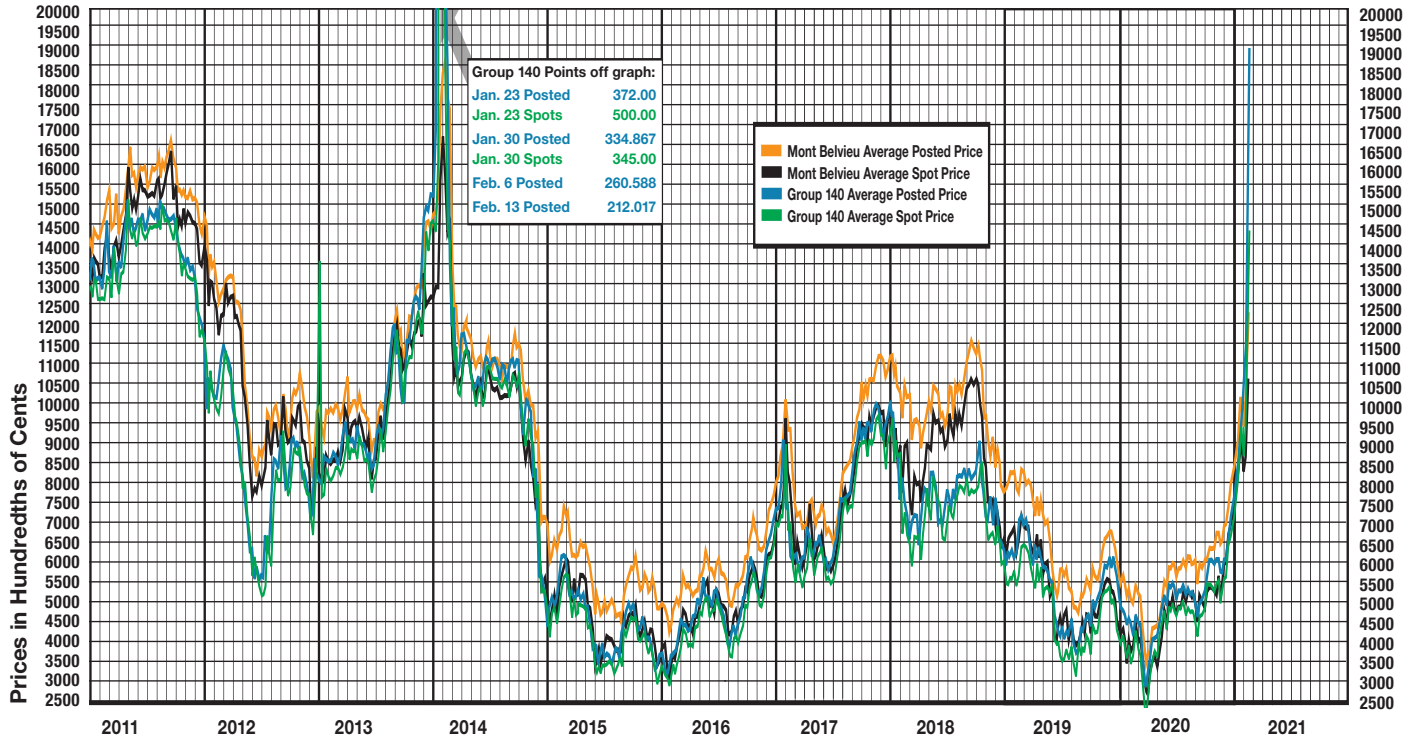


MONT BELVIEU & CONWAY (GROUP 140) AVERAGE THURSDAY PROPANE PRICES

MID-WEEK AVERAGE POSTED/ SPOT PROPANE PRICES

(Cents per Gallon)

Date	Mont Belvieu		Conway	
	POSTED	SPOT	POSTED	SPOT
01-21-21	97.257	85.000-85.750	96.697	86.250-87.750
01-28-21	103.090	92.000-93.750	87.797	81.875-82.250
02-04-21	94.007	82.375-82.750	97.047	85.750-86.250
02-11-21	98.922	84.625-85.625	115.247	90.750-94.500
02-18-21	122.506	100.000-102.500	189.147	130.500-143.500

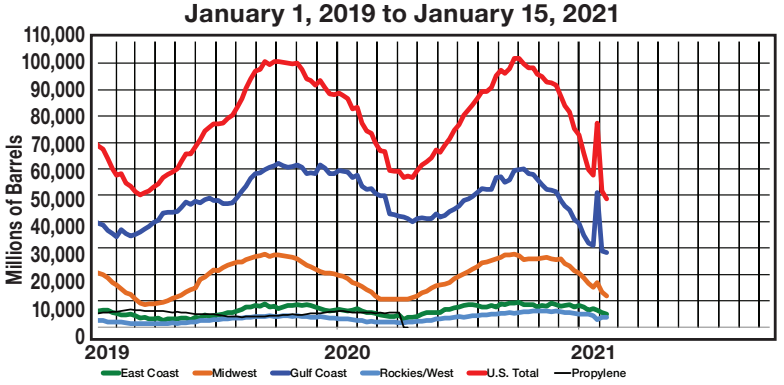
U.S. PROPANE INVENTORIES

January 15, 2021 to February 12, 2021, and One Year Ago

	1/15/21	1/22/21	1/29/21	2/5/21	2/12/21	2/14/20
East Coast	6.329	6.926	6.871	5.667	4.905	5.491
Midwest	16.718	15.187	14.421	13.351	11.735	14.296
Gulf Coast	31.924	31.093	30.523	28.797	28.358	46.841
Rockies/West	4.847	4.405	4.238	3.731	3.651	2.098
U.S. Total	59.818	57.610	56.053	51.545	48.649	68.726

U.S. PROPANE INVENTORIES

January 1, 2019 to January 15, 2021



U.S. RESIDENTIAL PROPANE PRICES

(Mid-Month, Cents per Gallon)

Region	Date		
	2-21	1-21	2-20
East Coast (PADD I)	296.4	288.1	260.2
Midwest (PADD II)	195.6	181.7	160.6
Average U.S.	228.8	218.3	198.1

Source: "This Week in Petroleum," Energy Information Administration

CANADIAN INVENTORIES

(February 1, 2021)

Thousand Cubic Meters

PROPANE

Region	2-21	1-21	Change	2-20
Propane—East	715.6	861.1	-16.9%	187.9
Propane—West	956.0	1183.6	-19.2%	266.9
Total Propane	**1671.6**	**2044.8**	**-18.3%**	**454.7**

BUTANE

Butane—East	216.3	275.6	-21.5%	100.4
Butane—West	617.0	787.6	-21.7%	197.5
Total Butane	**833.3**	**1063.1**	**-21.6**	**297.9**

Source: National Energy Board

There's Good Reason Why Our Products Are So Successful



We go beyond the ordinary. Full-Circle swivels incorporate a seal package developed specifically for liquefied gas use. Unlike lip seals or o-rings, our seal package rotates at one-half the swivel speed and can move in three directions simultaneously. That means ease of rotation and compensation for eccentric loads, rigid piping, and aggressive hose-end situations. We also incorporate lots of other features into our swivels adding to exceptional maintenance-free performanace under demanding conditions. Just one example is a patented damping system inside our hose-end swivel that helps cushion and absord a direct blow if the hose-end valve is dropped on its nose. That's another feature you won't find in anyone else's product.

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EIA'S ANNUAL ENERGY OUTLOOK EXPLORES COVID-19 IMPACT

The United States will likely take years to return to 2019 levels of energy consumption and carbon dioxide emissions following the impact of COVID-19 on the U.S. economy and global energy sector, according to projections in the U.S. Energy Information Administration's (EIA) Annual Energy Outlook 2021 (AEO2021). EIA projects that total U.S. energy consumption will return to 2019 levels by 2029, though that is highly dependent on the pace of U.S. economic recovery. In a case that assumes low economic growth, energy consumption may not return to 2019 levels until 2050. In most cases, EIA projects that U.S. energy-related carbon dioxide emissions will decrease through 2035 before reversing that trend. Renewable electric generating technologies are projected to account for almost 60% of the capacity additions from 2020 to 2050, and EIA projects that renewables' share of the electricity generation mix will more than double by 2050. The natural gas share will remain relatively flat at 36%, and the coal and nuclear shares will fall by about half, according to baseline projections in AEO2021. EIA projects that the U.S. will continue to export more petroleum and other liquids than it imports, but the balance of imports to exports will be highly sensitive to supply, demand and price factors. High oil and natural gas supply or high oil prices could result in increased domestic production and net exports. If prices or supply remain high, the U.S. is likely to export more energy than it imports through 2050.

SUPERIOR PLUS ANNOUNCES 3 RECENT ACQUISITIONS

Superior Plus Corp. has announced that one of its wholly owned subsidiaries has acquired all of the assets of a retail propane and distillate distribution company, operating under the trade name Holden Oil. Founded in 1924 and located in Peabody, Massachusetts, Holden is an independent retail energy distributor serving approximately 8,750 residential and commercial customers in the Northeast. Superior also announced that through one of its wholly owned Canadian subsidiaries, it has completed two transactions to acquire:

- The equity interests of a Quebec retail propane distribution company, operating under the trade name Miller Propane.
- The assets of an Ontario retail propane distribution company, operating under the trade name Highlands Propane.

SUBURBAN PROPANE PARTNERS, L.P. TO HOLD VIRTUAL 2021 TRI-ANNUAL MEETING

Suburban Propane Partners L.P. announced that it has scheduled its 2021 Tri-Annual Meeting of the Limited Partners of the Partnership to be held on May 18, 2021, beginning at 10 a.m. ET. The meeting will be conducted solely via webcast, and the unitholders of the partnership will not be able to attend the meeting in person. Additional information about the virtual meeting and how the partnership's unit holders will be able to attend and participate in the meeting will be provided in the notice of the meeting and proxy statement, to be sent to the partnership's unit holders and filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission in advance of the meeting.

HOWARD ENERGY PARTNERS CLOSES ON ACQUISITION OF REFINERY SERVICES FACILITY

Howard Energy Partners announced that it has closed on its previously announced agreement with a subsidiary of MPLX LP to purchase the Javelina Facility, which is located in Corpus Christi, Texas. Javelina is a treating and fractionation plant that extracts olefins, hydrogen and natural gas liquids from the gas streams produced by local refineries, creating purity products that are then sold to local markets on behalf of its refinery customers. The Javelina Facility is connected by pipeline to all of the major refineries in the Corpus Christi area and provides a critical service to help ensure the refineries' productive capabilities.

THOMPSONGAS ACQUIRES ALL SERVICE PROPANE INC.

ThompsonGas announced the acquisition of All Service Propane Inc., a propane provider in Northern California. ThompsonGas reports it is committed to serving the residential, commercial and agricultural customers who have valued the All Service Propane presence and service in the area for multiple decades. This acquisition strengthens ThompsonGas' national footprint by expanding the propane company's presence in Northern California. The acquisition of All Service Propane Inc. is ThompsonGas' first close to take place in 2021.

AGILITY FUEL SOLUTIONS AND HEXAGON MOBILE PIPELINE UNITE AS HEXAGON AGILITY

Agility Fuel Solutions and Hexagon Mobile Pipeline have merged to create Hexagon Agility, strengthening their position as a provider of (renewable) natural gas mobility solutions. Today, the combined business launched its new corporate identity and brand. Agility Fuel Solutions is a supplier of on-board high-pressure cylinders and natural gas fuel systems to leading OEMs and fleets. Hexagon Mobile Pipeline is the supplier of compressed gas delivery solutions to a variety of industries. The offerings cover an extensive spectrum of clean energy solutions.

INDUSTRY CALENDAR

March 2-4 — NRECA PowerXchange Annual Meeting
Virtual
cooperative.com/conferences-education/meetings

March 3 — Propane Education & Research Council (PERC) Southeast & South-Central Region Meeting
Charlotte, North Carolina
propane.com

March 4-5 — National Propane Gas Association Spring Benchmarking Council Meeting
Charlotte, North Carolina
npga.org/organization/npga-events

March 7-9 — National Propane Gas Association Spring TS&S Committee Meeting
Kansas City, Missouri
npga.org/organization/npga-events

March 8-9 — Energy Utility & Environment Conference 2021 Speaker Series: Utility Regulations, Policy, Strategies, ACE, NSR
Virtual
euec.com

March 9 — PERC East Midwest Region Meeting
Indianapolis, Indiana
propane.com

March 8-12 — Work Truck Week 2021
Virtual
info@ntea.com

March 30 — PERC Mid-Atlantic Region Meeting
Baltimore, Maryland
propane.com

April 12-13 — Energy, Utility & Environment Conference: CEMS, Testing, Monitors, Modeling
Virtual
euec.com

April 20 — New England Region Meeting
Providence, Rhode Island
propane.com

April 21-22 — PGANE Spring Meeting 2021
npga.org

April 22 — PERC Council Meeting
Virtual
propane.com

April 29 — PERC West Midwest Region Meeting
Minneapolis, Minnesota
propane.com

For additional calendar items, visit bpnews.com.

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NFPA Rules Change Future of Autogas Refueling

ELAFLEX

EURO Nozzles & Adapters



ZVG2-T EURO Nozzle with Scuff Guard Nozzle Talker

GasGuard Holster-Mod Flush Mount Lockable Holster
(Nozzle not included.)





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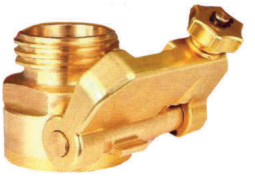

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STEVE WAMBOLD



NANCY J. COOP



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WARREN H. GFELLER

Platform Fuels Appoints Steve Wambold as CEO

Platform Fuels has appointed **Steve Wambold** chief executive officer. An active member of the National Propane Gas Association (NPGA), Wambold has led successful teams as chief executive officer (CEO) of Ferrellgas and Team Drive-Away and has become a sought-after consultant to business owners. During his nearly 20-year tenure with Ferrellgas, Wambold rose from a single branch manager to CEO. During his tenure, he grew propane-related EBITDA $150 million and had full P&L responsibility for the $2 billion company before he left in 2016. He oversaw more than 900 retail locations and 45,000 Blue Rhino selling sites as well as executing over 50 acquisitions. When Platform Fuels entered the propane industry in 2020 with its acquisition of six family-owned businesses, among those who noticed was Wambold. "I'm delighted to join the board of Platform Fuels. Platform has entered the propane space very strategically, with a singular focus on the future of the propane industry, and I am optimistic about the future of this company and the independent propane marketers it serves," Wambold said.

Cetane Associates Names Director of Marketing

Cetane Associates LLC announces that **Nancy J. Coop** has been promoted to director of marketing and is heading up the financial advisory firm's marketing activities. For the past year, Coop has worked as a consultant supporting Cetane Associates' business development efforts and industry relationships. She contributes more than 15 years of experience in the propane industry, including serving as a business development executive at Ferrellgas and as president and owner of Jarco, the bobtail manufacturing company. Her industry advocacy is highlighted by her role as the founding chair of the NPGA Women in Propane Council and by having been named to the 2020 LPGas Hall of Fame. Steve Abbate, managing director and principal of Cetane, said, "We are thrilled to have Coop step in as our marketing director. It became evident that Coop had a natural talent in marketing and her knowledge of business development, the propane and heating oil industries, and her involvement in industry associations made her an ideal choice to lead the marketing efforts for our company."

CHS Names General Counsel, Executive Vice President

CHS Inc. announced it has named **Brandon Smith** executive vice president (EVP) and general counsel. Smith will join CHS in late March 2021. Smith succeeds James Zappa, the company's EVP and general counsel since 2015. Smith brings more than 15 years of experience as a global leader and business partner focused on driving compliant and profitable growth, achieving continuous improvement and developing diverse teams. Most recently, Smith served as senior vice president, general counsel and corporate secretary at Tenneco Inc., an industrial company based in Lake Forest, Illinois. Prior to joining Tenneco in 2008, Smith was an attorney with Kirkland & Ellis LLP in Chicago, Illinois. "We are excited to bring Smith's energy and global experience to CHS. He is a leader who brings a proven record of success in building relationships, delivering results and thriving in a collaborative business environment," said Jay Debertin, CHS president and CEO. Smith will be a member of the CHS strategic leadership team and will report to Debertin.

Former Ferrellgas Inc. CEO Named to U.S. Department of Agriculture Advisory Committee

Warren H. Gfeller of Russell, Kansas, has been appointed by the office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) to serve on the Agricultural Technical Advisory Committee (ATAC) for Animal and Animal Products. The ATAC advises the USTR and Secretary of Agriculture on international trade matters relevant to U.S. agriculture. Gfeller is owner and operator of Stranger Valley Ranch, a commercial cow/calf operation that runs more than 800 cows on over 10,000 acres in Russell County, Kansas. The ranch is a progressive operation that is focused on added value, sustainability and quality assurance. "I am honored to have been appointed to serve on the Agricultural Technical Advisory Committee," said Gfeller. "I look forward to representing the interests of livestock producers across the U.S. in international trade negotiations." Gfeller has served as CEO and chief financial officer of public companies involved in domestic and international business, and as a member of boards of directors for companies in various industries. From 1983 to 1991, Gfeller served as president, CEO and as a director for Ferrellgas Inc.

WHAT DO THESE THREE RESPECTED PROPANE MARKETERS HAVE IN COMMON?







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IF YOU WEREN'T ALREADY IN THE PROPANE BUSINESS, WOULD YOU ENTER IT TODAY?

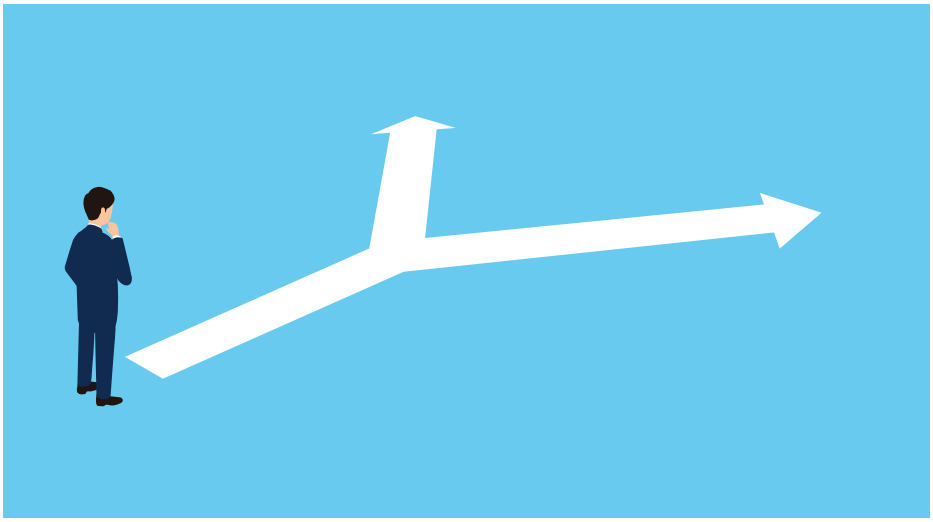
Industry veterans share mixed opinions on the current business climate

NANCY J. COOP

Has this question crossed your mind? The industry colleagues listed below took the challenge and replied with their honest answers.

We are all in this propane space on one level or another, working toward a future that holds promise, sustainability and profitability.

We recognize the challenges and reap the rewards. But would we choose it all over again in today's economic climate and with the challenges that persist? This column poses open-ended questions to some of your industry colleagues. The following are their replies reported verbatim.



RESPONSES FROM COAST TO COAST

"I love my business, and I love our industry. However, I cannot imagine starting a propane company from scratch today. In California, the number of government tax and oversight agencies is egregious, and the overlap in regulations is absurd. I am grateful that my father started this company during a time when it was relatively easy to launch a propane business."

Julie Johnson
Ted Johnson Propane
Baldwin Park, California

"In California, knowing what I know about the agenda in Sacramento, I would definitely think long and hard about opening up here. The state is committed to a non-carbon-based fuel energy system.

We already have rolling electrical blackouts in the summer because our grid system cannot keep up with demand. They are removing hydroelectric dams, which will take more supply out of the grid.

Regrettably, California sets a bad example for many other states that want to copy our policies in the name of climate change.

The Western Propane Gas Association (WPGA) is fighting hard to slow the progress of these policies and we appreciate the support of the National Propane Gas Association (NPGA), but we all need to join in this fight because these policies may be coming to a state you live and work in every day. We started our business with the intention of passing it on to our kids and grandkids. We pray it will still be here for our grandkids."

Chuck Kinnie
Shasta Gas Propane
Palo Cedro, California

"Although the bobtail business has its challenges, I cannot imagine myself in any other line of work. Every time that a truck rolls off the assembly line, I get a big smile on my face thinking about the joy its driver will get when he climbs behind the wheel for the first time."

Jason Soulon
Westmor Industries
Shawnee, Kansas

"Yes, I would absolutely enter the propane industry today. The industry is ever-evolving and continuously working through changes and challenges,

and that makes it a rewarding career choice. The propane industry is a fairly small industry — you have the opportunity to get to meet, know and work with some great people that become good friends.

It obviously has technical aspects, but this industry is really a logistics-based business, where optimizing resources to meet customer need is a daily focus. Good people who are well-trained and supported make for happy customers and a very rewarding career."

Boyd H. McGathey
Energy Distribution Partners
Parkville, Missouri

"The propane industry is facing some huge challenges, primarily from the environmentalists who want to do away with hydrocarbons altogether. However, there are still opportunities out there to exploit the weakness in those arguments. For a person in my shoes who recognize that potential, yes, I would take on that challenge."

Bruce Swiecicki
NPGA
Tinley Park, Illinois

"My husband has been a propane marketer since 1970, and I began working with him in 1988. When I look back at how things have changed over the years, I have mixed feelings about whether we would enter the propane business today.

While all companies face challenges, I think the whole business culture in this industry has changed. It is more difficult to hire employees who are loyal and want to work.

With the current administration in office, I am concerned about their 'no fossil fuels' plan. I don't think I would get into the propane industry; but when I look at all of the good friends we have made through the years, I would have missed out on some great relationships."

Rosie Buschur
McMahan's Bottle Gas
Dayton, Ohio

"Absolutely! I told my dad when I was 12 that I planned to sign his paycheck one day. That's a goal I would still be working toward if I were not already in the industry. I grew up in the propane industry and have always been drawn to the incredible people in it that so often feel like family."

Lauren Clark
Bergquist Inc.
Toledo, Ohio

"I'm fascinated with this industry, so I would say yes. I believe it's the best time to be in this industry, as the Green New Deal seems to be the current buzz — along with the electrification of everything.

Our industry has a great story to tell here. Propane is the cleanest alternative to gasoline and diesel and yes — cleaner than electricity. This dream of powering our entire world on electricity generated by the sun and wind is a misconception to say the least. Propane can be the solution, along with working with other clean sources to keep us moving forward, not only in production, but towards a healthier, cleaner climate."

Hayley Karicofe
AmeriGas
Churchville, Virginia

"Yes! Absolutely! With a laser focus on the most updated technology and putting the right people in the right seats on the bus."

Laurie Irish-Jones
Irish Propane
Buffalo, New York

"I am not in the retail propane business, but I work with many clients who are, and I have been involved in the industry for more than 30 years.

At my age, I would not enter into the business. However, if I were 10 years younger, I would certainly consider it. It's just a great industry, filled with local people serving local people in their own communities."

"The companies I work with are their own work-family units, and it typifies all that is good with family-owned small businesses.

The current environment of low interest rates is an extra bonus for funding capital to enter the industry, and numerous consolidation opportunities are available.

Yes, there is the Green New Deal and other relevant challenges at present. But we have a great structure of associations to support us. Yes, if I could knock off 10 years (or maybe 15), I would buy a bobtail."

Steve Abbate
Cetane Associates LLC
Kent, Connecticut

"Our industry has a great story to tell here. Propane is the cleanest alternative to gasoline and diesel — and yes — cleaner than electricity. This dream of powering our entire world by electricity generated by the sun and wind is a misconception to say the least. Propane can be the solution, along with working with other clean sources to keep us moving forward."

"My short answer to this month's question would likely be no — I would not go into the energy market today.

If I were able to pursue my childhood dream, the one I went to school for and was my passion, I would be training horses, teaching people to ride and

enjoying weekends at Appaloosa horse shows across the country. However, a twist of fate caused Jimmy and I to let the horses and my dreams go in 1986.

After my husband Jimmy passed in 2010, I found myself at the helm of Proctor Gas and soon embraced the industry and its wonderful members, many of whom I now call friends.

I've enjoyed my time learning and working, taking care of my customers and being more involved in the community.

I vividly remember Jimmy telling me on our way home from South Carolina in 2010 that he wasn't having any fun anymore. He said that the energy business was changing, and it wasn't what it used to be.

I didn't understand his comments back then, but I do now. I told our current governor, as he stood at my fiftieth open house in 2016, that our industry was facing a war and that I had never fought so hard to work for a living in my professional life.

I'm not afraid of work, and I'm not afraid to stand up for what's right. But having to fight every day to work for a living — well, that's exhausting.

So, knowing what I know now, I think I'd find something a little less stressful. I believe, at the end of the day, we will win this battle on energy because we are a valuable piece of America's energy source.

Am I young enough for this battle, though? I'm not so sure."

Judy Taranovich
Proctor Gas
Proctor, Vermont

PROPANE IN 2021

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Nancy J. Coop is an industry advocate. She serves as marketing director at Cetane Associates. Contact her at ncoop@cetane.net. Visit cetane.net.

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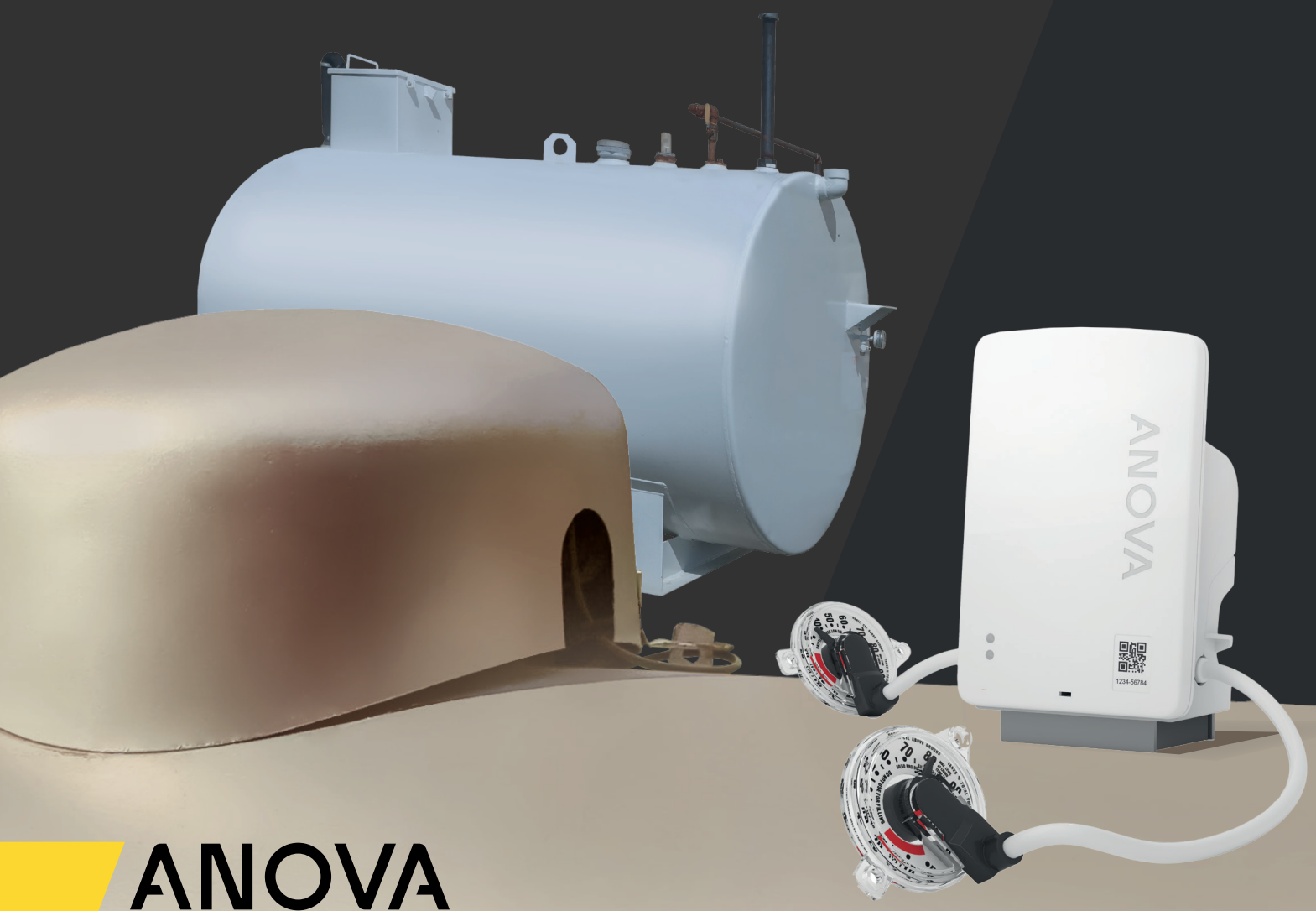

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REMEMBERING THE NEW LONDON SCHOOL EXPLOSION

How a tragedy in 1939 prompted the standardization of odorized gas in the U.S.

DAVID R. SCHLEE

In 1937, Walter Cronkite, then a cub reporter for United Press International, surveyed the scene of an explosion in New London, Texas.

Cronkite went on to win fame as a war correspondent covering World War II in Europe and later as a national network news anchor back in the United States.

But he remembered the event many years later, saying, "I did nothing in my studies nor in my life to prepare me for a story of the magnitude of that New London tragedy, nor has any story since that awful day equaled it."

The main building at the New London School had been destroyed in a natural gas explosion. At least 294 people, mostly students, were killed.

Hundreds more were injured. The tragedy is universally credited with prompting laws for the mandatory odorization of natural gas and propane in the U.S.

STATE-OF-THE-ART SCHOOL SYSTEM

In 1930, large oil deposits had been found in the New London area. There were soon oil wells everywhere — including 15 on school district property). Oil money quickly boosted the local economy (and the school district's budget) to such an extent that in 1932 (during the depths of the Great Depression), a brand new, state-of-the-art school was constructed to house students in the first grade through the twefIth grade.

Reportedly, by that time, the school district was the wealthiest in the nation. The grounds of the new school were complete with a football stadium that was the first in the state of Texas to have electric lights.

The school was built on sloping ground, and there was a large open space beneath the structure. The open area ran the entire 253-foot length of the building.



FATAL DECISION

The original plan was to heat the school by means of a steam boiler system. However, the school board overrode this plan and decided to install 72 gas heaters throughout the building. The gas was supplied by United Gas Company for a fee of $300 per month.

All was well with the new school system until January 1937, when the school board made a fatal decision. In order to save the $300 per month fee, the board cancelled its gas service with United Gas and had plumbers tap into a residue gas line owned by one of the drillers on its property, Parade Gasoline Company.

The tap was not authorized by Parade Gasoline Company, but such taps were common practice at the time, and most drillers winked at them.

Back then, the natural gas extracted with the oil was generally considered to be a valueless waste product and was flared off. The raw gas that now fed the school's heaters varied from day to day in quality. More significantly, the gas was not odorized.

LEAKING TAP

Tragically, the tap was not only unauthorized, but it was also not installed properly, and it was leaking. The leaking gas migrated into — and ultimately filled — the large open space beneath the main high-school building. For some time prior to the explosion, students complained of headaches. However, little notice was given to these early alarms.

On the afternoon of March 18, 1937, there were at least 500 students and about 40 teachers in the main building. By good fortune, the students in the first grade through the fourth grade had been given the afternoon off.

A PTA meeting was being held in a separate gymnasium, which was not seriously damaged in the explosion.

At 3:17 p.m., a shop teacher turned on an electric sander. This is generally accepted as the source of ignition for the devastating explosion that followed.

THE EXPLOSION

The walls of the school bulged, and the roof first lifted and then crashed back down. The building collapsed. The explosion was heard four miles away, and it was so powerful that a two-ton block of concrete was hurled 200 feet away from the building, where it crushed a 1936 Chevrolet.

Those in the PTA meeting rushed to the scene, and within minutes, local residents started to arrive to assist in the desperate rescue and recovery efforts, mostly digging through rubble with bare hands. Oil field workers, discharged from their jobs, soon joined the effort with heavier equipment to move concrete and steel.

The governor sent in the Texas Rangers, the highway patrol and the U.S. National Guard. Thirty doctors, 100 nurses and 25 embalmers arrived from Dallas, Texas. It took over 17 hours to clear the entire scene.

AFTERMATH

Seventy lawsuits were filed against both the school district and Parade Gasoline Company, but it was a different era then, and the lawsuits were quickly dismissed.

However, the school superintendent was forced to resign — he had lost a son, a niece and a nephew in the explosion. The U.S. Bureau of Mines investigated and quickly discovered the faulty tap on the residue gas line.



Within weeks, the Texas legislature acted. It enacted a registration act to regulate the practice of engineering, due to the improper installation of the tap. More importantly for our industry, it mandated the odorization of all gas used for residential or commercial use.

Other states, as well as the federal government, quickly followed this odorization requirement. Today, these requirements are uniform and well-established in all parts of the country as part of our industry's safety infrastructure.

The event that prompted these requirements is remembered as the most catastrophic school disaster to occur in the history of the U.S. Today, a museum and a memorial in New London commemorate the disaster. ■

David R. Schlee is of counsel to the Kansas City law firm of Baty Otto Coronado P.C. He may be contacted at dschlee@batyotto.com. Visit batyotto.com.

WHY SHOULD CUSTOMERS BUY FROM YOU?

The value of employing a unique selling proposition in your business

PAT THORNTON

In a world where advertisers are constantly heard offering "low prices" and "great service," advocates of unique selling propositions note that there is nothing special about "low prices" and "great service" because most competitors are claiming to offer them.

"It's the kiss of death," said Mark Dahl of Accountable Marketing, a marketing consultant located in Columbia, Missouri. "When everyone is offering the same thing, why should the customer make their purchase from you?"

Dahl has spent most of his career helping companies identify just what makes their organization unique to capitalize on those offerings. He offered three examples:

1. *A supermarket* — "Do they have another feature that Walmart doesn't offer?" Dahl asked. "If they have an outstanding butcher, they should consider focusing on the quality of the meat to attract customers."
2. *A service provider* — A plumber or other service provider could decide to offer 24-hour emergency service if no one else in the area does, as one of his clients did. Dahl notes sustainability is important, and challenged whether the plumber could really deliver on this offer. There needs to be a clear definition of what plumbing needs truly represent an "emergency."
3. *An attorney* — "I worked with an attorney who emphasized an ability to be successful regarding one law regarding paternity tests," Dahl said. "They attracted numerous clients emphasizing this specialty rather than just offering the same services most attorneys offer."



Over the next several issues, BPN will cover unique selling propositions with the help of several retail propane marketers from around the United States. The marketers will share the tactics that make their company unique in their specific market areas. Beginning on page 20, hear from Dan Richardson, president and chief executive officer of Conger LP Gas in Tifton, Georgia.

The concept of the unique selling proposition was first introduced in 1960 by Rosser Reeves, author of Reality in Advertising. He proposed the concept as a theory to explain a pattern in successful advertising campaigns of the early 1940s. Reeves said to be successful, a unique selling proposition must satisfy three criteria:

1. Each advertisement must make a proposition to the customer. Each advertisement must say to the reader, "Buy this product, and you will get this specific benefit."
2. The proposition must be one that the competition either cannot or does not offer. It must be unique — either a uniqueness of brand or a claim not otherwise made in that particular field.
3. The proposition must be so strong that it can move the mass millions (i.e. it should entice new customers to use your product).

Examples of classic unique selling propositions include, "Melts in your mouth, not in your hand" (M&M's); "Good to the last drop" (Maxwell House); and "You deserve a break today" (McDonald's). These were highlighted by Bob Bly in the November 2005 issue of Entrepreneur magazine.

As for the first of the three criteria, Bly notes that strong unique selling propositions have a benefit — whether direct or implied. Weak ones don't.

State Farm's "Like a good neighbor, State Farm is there" has a benefit. If you have a problem and are insured by State Farm, they will review and pay your claim promptly, giving you the money you need sooner.

Bly noted that the second criteria does not mean the company must be the only one making the offer. In the case of M&M's, other companies later made candies that would not melt in your hands, but M&M's owned the position already. The others would have to say, "We also melt in your mouth, not in your hand."

It can also be something that multiple competitors offer, but no one else claims as a benefit in their advertising. For example, a beer offered that the bottles were washed in live steam and stated, "Beer so pure, the bottles are washed in live steam."

> A service provider could offer 24-hour emergency service if no one else in the area does. Dahl notes that sustainability is important, and challenged whether the service provider could really deliver on this offer. There needs to be a clear definition of what needs truly represent an 'emergency.'

While most beers use live steam to clean bottles, the beer-drinking public is not very aware of this; therefore, it appears to be unique.

The third criteria, according to Bly, is that a proposition must create a significant advantage over other products in the same category. An example was given of a piano factory that installed a metal bar in each piano to prevent warping, "Wood warps over time."

The factory foreman explained. "The bar stabilizes the piano to prevent warping. That way, this piano will sound the same in 20 years as it does the day it is first played." Bly noted that the unique feature (the stabilizer bar) coupled with a powerful benefit (preservation of sound quality) became the basis for a successful advertising campaign.

Dahl said that while Nike's "Just do it" campaign makes no direct mention of a specific benefit, it was a successful campaign due to a significant amount of advertising that successfully positioned its brand in the eyes of consumers.

"Everyone knows the 'Just do it' statement and the trademark swoosh symbol," he said. "It could be argued that Nike created a subtle unique selling proposition message that implies a benefit to athletes as well as everyone else — if you wear the Nike brand, you are empowered to do about anything you set your mind to."

Also, Dahl believes the mention in the third criteria of "mass millions" can be amended to better fit your specific company. "An advertiser with a small business likely doesn't need 'mass millions' to be successful. It may be that attracting 500 regular customers makes you extremely successful," Dahl said. "That can still be applied as the customized goal for your business rather than 'mass millions.'" ■

Pat Thornton is a 25-year veteran of the propane industry, with 20 years at Propane Resources and five years at Butane-Propane News. He has served on the PERC Safety & Training Advisory Committee and the Missouri PERC Board of Directors.



FOR CONGER LP GAS, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IS CAPITAL

How COVID-19 has challenged one company's propane marketing strategy and its tactics for adapting to the times

PAT THORNTON



Nearly 10 years ago, Conger LP Gas (Tifton, Georgia) started a process to market autogas, lawn mower conversions and agricultural programs. Replacing old diesel engines in irrigation systems with propane models that are more fuel efficient and cost-effective became a focus across the company's 150 square miles of sales territory.

Large open houses that brought in hundreds of Tifton-area residents were introduced; a home show was created in 2018 to advertise propane appliances to builders and consumers; and a new location with a larger showroom — including a demonstration kitchen — was introduced in 2018 to help the company make community events and further education about propane's many benefits regular attractions.

ENERGY CONVERSATIONS TAKE ON A NEW SHAPE WITH COVID-19

The useful methods Conger LP Gas has found to expand its customer base and propane usage make the company a great example of a unique selling proposition. BPN caught up with Dan Richardson, president and chief executive officer of Conger LP Gas to discuss the company's position in the marketplace amid concern that COVID-19 has at least temporarily delayed key tactics for sharing his message at showroom events.

"Well, we never dreamed COVID-19 would last this long," Richardson said. "It's certainly changed what we can do and how we can do some things. We don't want to become a hotbed for COVID-19. Events at the new showroom and demonstration kitchen were going great, but we are trying to be socially responsible, knowing we can't fully protect participants right now. We're hoping to be doing events again soon. It is a great way to get our message out. Events, such as cooking classes with a chef, brought in many people who were not normally coming into the office."



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In addition to cooking classes, other events hosted by Conger LP Gas include a "First Responders" program, a "Paw Patrol" program, a demonstration with a life-flight helicopter, demonstrations with fire trucks and patrol cars and hosting a representative from the United States Army.

With the investment in a new 8,000-square-foot showroom and office after many years in a much smaller space, Richardson is looking forward to being able to host community events again.

"People who had not yet come to our office were saying they didn't know about propane clothes dryers or other things we had to sell. We are still getting a residual positive effect from all the events we did. In the meantime, we've got to focus on other ways to attract customers," he said.

"Quality and above-and-beyond service is something we always strive to provide. If you call us and have service needs, we want to be able to service that appliance in a reasonable amount of time. With others, it's often eight to 12 weeks before the marketer can get to you. We like to be there within a week. We make contact via phone and try to shoot for a mutually agreed-upon date," he continued.

KEEPING THE POSITIVE EXPERIENCES OF PROPANE BENEFITS GOING

Richardson, who serves as a member of the Propane Education & Research Council (PERC), said he believes his company, like PERC, is trying to fit what the consumer is looking for, and not vice versa.

"PERC is trying to pull people into using propane and Conger LP Gas is as well. With 60% of the tanks we set going to homes that have never before used gas, I don't think it's in everyone's best interest for retailers to just take customers away from each other. We spend more time looking for potential customers at homes that do not have a tank. Most of the 40% are those who already have a tank with us, but are expanding their use of propane," Richardson said.

Richardson said he believes consumers are out there who will pay more for convenience. He notes, though, that like businesses in all industries, there are many companies that don't make their customers feel their business is appreciated. He is concerned that when companies do research, too often, they spend too much time consulting experts rather than consulting actual customers and potential customers.

"People should go to consumers and just ask what they want and need," he said. "It is also important that every member of the Conger team realizes they are part of the sales team."

At the 2019 National Propane Gas Association Southeastern Expo, Richardson described to attendees how employees are happy to talk to friends and neighbors about the benefits of propane. He mentioned an employee who spent 20 minutes answering questions from a neighbor she ran into on a Saturday. "A lot of propane employees might typically just say to call the office on Monday," he said.





TIME-TESTED TACTICS

Richardson feels that his concept for taking care of customers goes back to watching his dad, who was a serviceman from 1956 to 1990. Richardson also worked at the company for a couple of summers while growing up. "One example of a lesson learned related to a 40-gallon water heater. Do I want to make money one time with that water heater or sell more of them at a lower rate to gain more recurring business? In addition to the propane itself, there are other fees, including service work," he said.

Richardson also believes that new generations of future customers are being groomed as they grow up in the community. "If we take care of a family well for many years, the next generation will be well aware of us when they are establishing a home of their own," he said.

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A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO NEW MARKET SEGMENTS

During the ongoing pandemic, Richardson continues to advocate his many propane-related offerings via social media.

Videos featuring Richardson talking to customers about everything from propane benefits to the importance of following COVID-19 protocols are still a way to connect with customers. “Like most of the country, we are hoping to be able to do in-person events again soon when it is safe.”

The pandemic is not slowing interest in new ways to save money on irrigation. “Conger LP Gas is the only retail propane company in Georgia that sells propane engines for irrigation systems,” said Bill Moore, an alternative fuels sales manager who has often traveled to county events to promote propane’s potential for savings with irrigation systems.

“For us, electricity is cheap and will be the go-to option most of the time, especially for farms along highways with easy access to electricity.” The opportunity for propane comes when farmers have fields where electricity is not easily accessible. Running lines more than a hundred extra yards rapidly becomes expensive. “This is where propane makes sense — especially when diesel engines are becoming much more expensive due to compliance with Tier 4 emissions standards that do not affect cleaner-burning propane.”

A return to normalcy may also bring back the annual South Georgia Home Showcase Conger LP Gas launched in 2018 with Short & Paulk, a company that operates five lumberyards and home centers in South Georgia.

This event was designed as a chance to talk to builders, contractors and architects who are often too busy to talk with at a jobsite. The first day of the show in 2018 was invitation only, and solely contractors were invited. Contractors and vendors could mingle on the show floor in the afternoon and at a dinner in the evening. The dinner included a presentation by Jesse Marcus, director of residential and commercial business development at PERC. He told the more than 300 attendees present about incentives available to builders.

The second day of the show was open to both contractors and the general public from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Almost 100 displays were set up by vendors, and many of the exhibitors also offered product demonstrations. An estimated 1800 people attended on the second day.

Educational events also helped draw contractors to the event with about a dozen continuing education (CE) classes, including some that earned attendees CE credits from the American Institute of Architects and the National Association of the Remodeling Industry.

“Although the Home Showcase was curtailed in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19, we are still benefiting from positive relationships established in 2018 and 2019,” Richardson said. “A trust level has been built with many contractors we didn’t know as well before organizing these events. We look forward to being able to safely host these events again.”

Facilitating new ways to spark everyday discussions with everyday consumers about what really makes sense will result in a chance to take care of their energy needs. Unique methods to share propane’s environmental and economical benefits are taking place one customer at a time. ■

Pat Thornton is a 25-year veteran of the propane industry, with 20 years at Propane Resources and 5 years at Butane-Propane News. He has served on the PERC Safety & Training Advisory Committee and the Missouri PERC Board of Directors.

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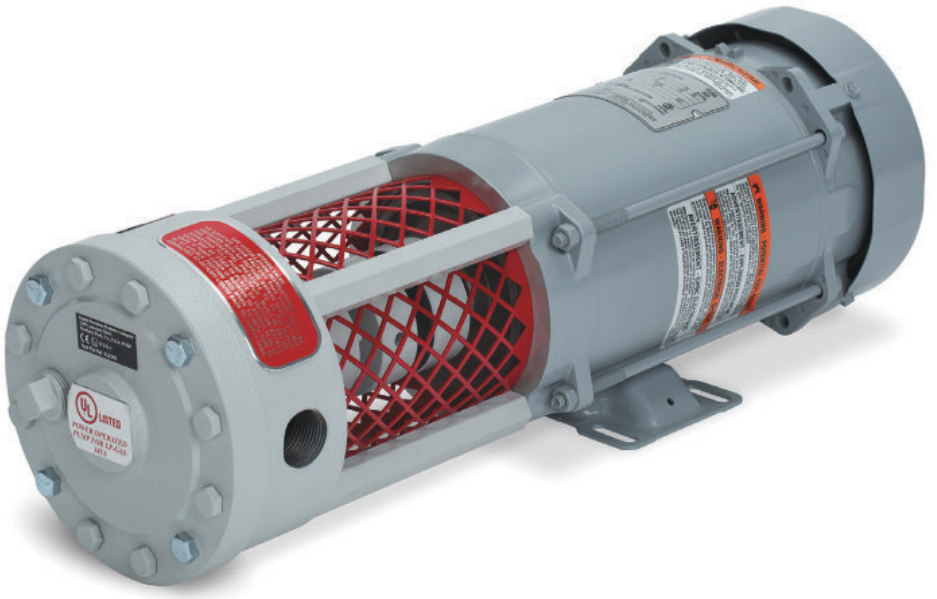

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DON'T DEPEND ON THE DO-OVER

Why you should be updating your employee handbook now to adjust to the challenges of the past year

FRANK THOMPSON

My wife and I watched a few Hallmark movies during the past holiday season. All of them seem to have the same theme. Boy meets girl; they fall for each other; and then, because they don't communicate how they feel about each other, they go their separate ways. Years later, they reconnect.

The sad part, though, is that they have wasted years of their lives, which they can't replace. They wish they had told each other of their true feelings. They wish for a do-over. Reality says you can't go back and undo the decisions made years ago.

Finding "the one" that the movies talk about is truly a life-changing event. However, the act of dotting all the i's and crossing the t's is what will keep your love alive in perpetuity.

Once, as a young married man, while struggling to handle two jobs and four children, I forgot my wife's birthday. That was an expensive mistake. There were lots of tears on her part, and lots of remorse on my part, and it is something I have never lived down. I knew better. I had written the date down and, somehow, I forgot it. I often have wished for a do-over.

For many of us, when we look back over our lives, we remember the times when we were too busy to complete some tasks, which had serious repercussions long term. Then we wished — or still wish — for a do-over.

Procrastination can be defined in many ways. According to the dictionary, it could be delaying a task, hesitating, vacillating, or even kicking a can down the road. Iit all boils down to knowing that you should do something that you have delayed or avoided doing.

Several things come to mind in business. COVID-19 is still prevalent in the workforce and there are many federal, state and local mandates determining what employers can and cannot do regarding employees with the virus. Have you updated your employee handbook to keep up?

Megan Bell, an employment practices underwriter for Rockwood Insurance, recently sent an email regarding an expected sharp increase in employment-related claims in 2021.

Some of the concerns, which need to be addressed in your employee handbook, are the direct result of the coronavirus pandemic and the civil unrest of the past year.

For instance, have you addressed employee safety, including washing hands, social distancing and wearing a mask; vaccination requirements; wages and hours; and medical privacy and discrimination?

Another example of an issue that should be addressed in the employee



handbook is the issue of recreational drug usage, which many states have recently voted to approve. The federal law that prohibits the use of drugs still supersedes the states' acceptance of recreational drugs. Propane marketers need to maintain a drug-free environment. That includes many prescription drugs, too.

While you are revisiting your employee handbook, you should review and, if necessary, rewrite the section on drivers and equipment operators. Do you have a clear policy in place regarding distracted driving and progressive discipline? Waiting until your company has a serious employee situation to update your employment manual will make you wish that you could have a do-over. While the COVID-19 pandemic has forced some people to face their own mortality, others have largely ignored the reality that the virus could infect them and that it could be fatal. No matter what you believe, we all have an expiration date built into us. Why not take the time to take care of your family's and your company's future by providing for them with a will or a trust right now?

> In your employee handbook, have you addressed employee safety, including washing hands, social distancing and wearing a mask; vaccination requirements; wages and hours; and medical privacy and discrimination?

While I am not in the business of selling life insurance or personal lines, I am in the business of assisting owners of propane companies to fill any gaps in their homeowner's and personal automobile exposures along with their other assets. This duty also means inquiring whether or not wills and trusts are in place.

What have you put off in 2020 that you can still fix in 2021? Make sure you and your company are not in a situation where you will be looking back and wishing for a do-over. ■

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



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WLPGA'S GLOBAL TECH CONFERENCE RECOGNIZES YEARS OF INNOVATION

Virtual event covers distribution optimization models, digital-transformation technologies and more

PAT THORNTON

The World LPG Association's (WLPGA) Global Technology Conference (GTC), first held in Chicago in 2006, is now an annual event to recognize innovators and promising technologies. The event is held annually in conjunction with the World LPG Forum.

Last year, however, both events were held as part of a virtual event known as e-LPG Week. James Rockall, chief executive officer (CEO) and managing director of WLPGA, outlined how innovators are selected for honors at the GTC.

"Abstracts demonstrating some of the industry's most promising innovations are invited each year," he said. "The GTC steering committee selects papers based on a list of agreed criteria, including the degree of technical innovation, safety improvement potential, operational efficiency, commercial, marketing potential, etc. The winners are selected from a group of finalists based on committee scoring and online audience polling."

Topics included distribution optimization models allowing real-time integration of consumer needs and digital-transformation technologies using Internet of Things (IoT) and artificial intelligence (AI) that can resolve low demand-forecast accuracy and daily route inefficiency issues.

Emission reductions and engine aftertreatment systems were also part of the submissions in addition to innovative autogas liquified petroleum gas (LPG) systems with the latest direct injection (DI) car engine technologies.



Customer cooking with PayGo Energy LPG

GTC 2020 INNOVATION AWARD

The GTC 2020 Innovation Award went to Gasco GLP Chile (Santiago, Chile) for its presentation "GasConnect." The paper written by Fernando Ledesma, Gasco GLP, Chile, states: "Gasconnect is a new Gasco distribution model that aims to reduce the delivery times of cylinders through the implementation of technology that allows real-time integration of consumer needs with the capabilities of our distribution network. Specifically, when a customer places an order through the Gasconnect mobile application, it optimizes logistics through an algorithm, locating the truck that can deliver the order fastest, assigning it to them and allowing the user to see where it comes from, what time it arrives and evaluate the service delivered. Gasconnect is a real online logistical system that creates a huge positive impact in customer satisfaction. Also, it provides a big quantity of data that allows us to get more knowledge of our customers



PayGo Energy Cylinder Smart Meter

bringing them new products or services making their life easier. Through Gasconnect, we can add overnight distribution, dynamic prices and the possibility to prepaid the product direct on the mobile phone."

RUNNER-UP

Tecogen Inc. (Waltham, Massachusetts) was the runner-up for its presentation, "An LPG Near-Zero Emission System for Forklifts." The paper, written by Robert A. Panora, states: "The development status of an engine aftertreatment system designed to reduce engine emissions from LPG forklift trucks to very low levels is presented. The system was developed and patented by Tecogen Inc. for use in stationary natural gas and propane products used in combined heat and power applications and has been deployed successfully in the most stringent air districts in the United States — notably Los Angeles, California. For the forklift application and with funding and support from the Propane Energy Resource Council (PERC) and Mitsubishi Caterpillar Forklift America (MCFA), this technology was upfitted and tested on a MCFA forklift. It was added to the exhaust system and fit compactly under the counterweight. Test results were consistent with those required for "Near Zero" certification under California certification regulation. Certification initiatives in an approved laboratory have been delayed by the COVID-19 crisis but are planned to resume when international travel restrictions are lifted."

DISTRIBUTION

In the category of Distribution, Tokyo Gas Liquid Holdings, Tokyo Gas (Tokyo, Japan), and Azbil Kimmon were recognized for their "Next Era of Cylinder Distribution Using Digital Transformation Technologies." Naoshi Shiono, Tokyo Gas Liquid Holdings, Soma Toki, Tokyo Gas and Eiji Murakami, Azbil Kimmon, Japan authored a paper on the subject.

The paper states: "In the Japanese liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) industry, utilities must forecast the customer demand and deliver cylinders before customers run out of gas. Every utility currently faces two issues: low demand-forecast accuracy and daily-route inefficiency of drivers. Drivers travel the route daily, replace almost empty LPG cylinders only and retain cylinders with unconsumed LPG. However, digital-transformation technologies using Internet of Things (IoT) and artificial intelligence (AI) can resolve these issues. Because some IoT devices connected to meters have been developed in Japan, utilities can now obtain the daily customer consumption using low-cost remote sensing. We also develop routing and scheduling software that depends on AI with a logistics software company to calculate the best daily route. According to our estimates, delivery efficiency can be improved by 30% or more compared with past practices. Through trial, we found that our software is beneficial for customer satisfaction and driver management."



Radio frequency identification (RFID) tag technology

LPG APPLICATIONS — AUTOGAS

Prins Autogassystemen BV (Eindhoven, Netherlands) was recognized in the category of LPG Applications – Autogas for its paper "Beyond the Latest Engineering," written by Angelique Berden, Prins Autogassystemen B.V., the Netherlands.

The paper states: "Unique and future proof LPG system for latest DI car engines up to Euro 6D emission standards. The system is equipped with its own design Prins AFC-3.0 DI computer and Prins eVP-500 LPG reducer. With this new technology in the Prins VSI-3 DI LPG system, 2020 model petrol cars with DI/MPI engines can now be converted to LPG and run more smoothly, efficiently and cleanly. It is unique, as Prins engineers went one step further than the car engineers in lowering emissions and petrol use for the latest car models. It is a unique and top-notch performance that is of great benefit and value to the total LPG market worldwide."

LPG APPLICATIONS — DOMESTIC

Rinnai (Peachtree, Georgia) was recognized for the paper "Central Heating and Domestic Hot Water (DHW) Generating Using Hydronic Airhandler and Tankless Water Heaters" in the category of LPG Applications – Domestic. The paper states: "The session discusses the application of using gas-fired, tankless water heaters as a combination solution when coupled with a hydronic air handler unit to simultaneously provide central heat and domestic hot water. The solution leverages one gas appliance to provide two solutions while adding comfort to the home with high quality heat. When coupled with a condensing tankless water heater, the combination also provides a high efficiency solution for domestic hot water generation and space heating."

THE EVOLUTION OF TECH

During a section of the program called



RFID technology

"GTC – Where Are They Now?", some of the authors of papers presented over the years gave updates on how their technologies have evolved since the original presentations at GTC. The section included RFID for cylinders, synthetic natural gas systems, composite cylinders, telemetry for storage tanks and smart meters.

Cylinder Theft

Speakers included Barbara Mason of Trovan Ltd. (North Ferriby, United Kingdom), one of the original presenters in 2006 who spoke about the challenges of cylinder theft.

"The LPG industry is fighting a number of serious problems. Customers do not return cylinders. Supply chains are very inefficient. For every cylinder in customers' hands, the operation must maintain two to seven additional cylinders. Cylinders are stolen. Mandatory inspections are missed. There is pilferage and diversion of LP gas," Mason said. "Bringing IoT to your operation will let you attack these and other problems. How do you do it? Put radio frequency identification (RFID) tags on the individual cylinders. These tags communicate with readers, which, in turn, send information to the cloud. Asset tracking is done today in all other industries: beverage, retail, candy bars, soda and water. Everybody is doing it. Only the LPG industry is not."

"RFID is the only practical solution available today and for years to come because RFID works where bar codes do not. And low-frequency, passive RFID is the solution for steel cylinders, moving and filling plants. With the asset tracking you can achieve total transparency for your operation. There is no other way to efficiently monitor activity in your filling plants, repair shops and the supply chain," Mason continued. "Trovan has a complete system that addresses all parts of your value chain. You will be able to upgrade your level of service and customer retention to a level that has never been achieved before. Achieve better efficiency in your filling operations and take your business to a new level."

Synthetic Natural Gas

Gary Eaton was with Ely Energy (Tulsa, Oklahoma) as managing director in 2006 when he spoke on synthetic natural gas. "I last gave a talk on synthetic natural gas in Chicago, [Illinois], on the technology session of the World LP Gas Forum. I've been asked to talk a little bit about the changes that have come about since 2006. I think the biggest change has been in the technology that has been utilized to make the mixing systems operate. There's a great deal of accuracy and precision that are provided by the types of turbine flow meters and programmable logic controls that are now adapted to the mixing process at least certainly for the higher-pressure mixing units," Eaton said. "When I first started in this business 35 or 36 years ago, the mixing units were much more primitive and generally based on regulation systems with very simple valves. I believe most of these mixing valves have been replaced with systems that are actually measuring each flow stream."

Eaton said equipment available today is far superior to what was available in the past. "I continue to believe that certainly in developing countries and remote areas this sort of fueling system has a great benefit," he said.

Composite Cylinders

James Berglund, regulatory affairs manager at Hexagon Ragasco (Raugoff, Norway) had presented on composite cylinders several years ago. "Composite LPG cylinders have been around since the 1990s, but it was only around 2006 they became more prevalent," Berglund said. "Composite LPG cylinders have already become a commodity in many countries, but there are still some areas where use of the cylinder is not as widespread. We estimate there are more than 20 million composite cylinders in circulation on the global market."

Berglund said that since 2006, substantial investment has been made to further hone the technology and improve the products to better fit the needs of the LPG marketer.

"Although it's fairly easy to replace metallic LPG cylinders with composite ones, there are still some noticeable differences that should be considered," he said. "Most composite LPG cylinders have some inherent properties that set them apart from their metallic counterparts. They are, for example, lighter to enable easier handling and also translucent to consistently allow for visual level indication. But they are also bleve-free and corrosion-free, resulting in lower impact on the LPG market distribution chain in terms of transportation and maintenance. In the end, I also want to stress that while composite LPG cylinders are built strong and sturdy, still, a very good visual inspection of every step of the distribution chain is very important."

Berglund said that his company witnessed the start of the composite cylinder era and will remain here in the future as this is a very long-term commitment in a crucial global market.

Telemetry-Based LPG Distribution

Anova's (Sydney, Australia) Robert Battye, senior vice president, customer engagement and product strategy, said, "I want to discuss with you what has changed with telemetry-based

LPG distribution since my 2013 London presentation titled, 'The Road to 60% Average Fills and Why Telemetry Often Disappoints.' Many of the barriers to achieving average fill rate at 60% discussed in 2013 have been addressed."

Battye focused on three areas: technology, total cost of ownership and business transformation.

"Technology first; Cloud platforms and application programming interface standards have enabled the transparent and timely integration of tank level and diagnostic data with forecasting, ticketing and customer relationship management systems. The reliability and connectivity of telemetry devices has increased with 15-plus year factory life being today's new norm," Battye said. "Telemetry total cost of ownership, which includes depreciation, monthly data fees and installation cost, has dramatically fallen from $60 per year in 2013 to below $30 for cellular devices and below $20 for some new IoT appliances in 2020."

He noted that distributors who basically deploy tank monitors are asking companies like Anova to not only provide the equipment, cloud software service and field support, but also change management and business transformation to help companies achieve the telemetry investment program objective.

"These objectives remain unchanged," Battye said. "More volume, better productivity, fewer runouts and a platform for organic growth and reduced customer churn. Working with many of our customers on such programs, it is evident from achieved results that the road to 60% average fill has never been so easy to navigate."

Smart Meters

Nick Quintong, CEO and co-founder of Paygo Energy (Niarobi, Kenya), a provider of smart meters designed for lower-income customers to be able to "pay as you go," won the Global Technology Conference award in 2018.

"Since then, we've made great strides achieving our mission unlocking clean cooking fuel for the next billion people," Qunitong said. "As a hardware company, it is incredibly difficult to move from concept and prototype through to commercialization. Back in 2018, we were applying our technology with hundreds of homes in Kenya. Today we've raised over $8 million in venture capital; we've tripled the size of our team; and we have already manufactured thousands of meters for deployment with our partners in Asia and Africa." ■

Pat Thornton is a 25-year veteran of the propane industry, with 20 years at Propane Resources and 5 years at Butane-Propane News. He has served on the PERC Safety & Training Advisory Committee and the Missouri PERC Board of Directors.



NPGA ANNOUNCES MOVE TO NEW OFFICE, PLANS FOR 2021 IN WINTER MEETING

Board addresses new environmental messaging campaign and resources for dealing with COVID-19

STEVE RELYEA

New ways of doing business were announced at the National Propane Gas Association (NPGA) Winter 2021 Board of Directors meeting. During the February meeting, which was held via webinar, speakers reported that NPGA and the Propane Education & Research Council (PERC) will soon be sharing an office and that NPGA will be conducting more meetings virtually, even after the pandemic.

"The current environment has given us an opportunity to reconsider how we do business," said Denis Gagne, NPGA chair, as he opened the meeting. Virtual meetings have proven to be more efficient and cost-effective and therefore should boost participation. "We will do more virtual meetings going forward," Gagne said.

The sharing of office space with PERC, similarly, will save money for the industry and improve communication between the two national organizations, speakers said. NPGA plans to sublease two-thirds of PERC's office space in Washington, D.C., beginning in January 2022. "This will result in a substantial savings for the industry and will allow us to be more efficient and effective," said Steve Kaminski, president and chief executive officer (CEO) of NPGA.

In the meantime, despite the pandemic, the association has been actively advocating for the industry. "I am impressed by our collective ability to accomplish our work virtually," Kaminski said.

In the legislative and regulatory arena, NPGA staff devoted most of its efforts to the $1.4 trillion omnibus legislative package that was passed by the United States Congress in December 2020. Several provisions the association advocated for are now in the law.

They include appropriations funding opportunities through the Department of Energy; a one-year extension of the alternative fuel credits; COVID-19 relief, energy provisions that support the use of combined heat and power (CHP) and autogas. Following the recent U.S. election, a priority of NPGA staff in 2021 will be engagement with new members in the House and Senate and with new federal regulatory staff. "We've already begun to engage members of Congress and the administration," Kaminski said.

On the environmental front, he highlighted the creation of a task force that includes officers and staff of NPGA and PERC. The task force is currently working on an environmental messaging campaign. "Our goal is to develop universal messaging about the benefits of propane and how propane compares favorably with other energy sources," Kaminski said.

He also detailed NPGA's participation in several pro-energy choice coalitions. "We support the continued use of clean energy and oppose forced electrification," he added.

On the topic of meetings, Kaminski reported that NPGA has successfully recontracted with all applicable venues to move this year's Southeastern Expo



from April 2021 to October 2021. This move was announced at the previous board meeting. “We will make sure it is safe and exhibitor- and attendee-friendly,” he said. “We will have extra floor space in order to do that.” In addition, the association has begun negotiating a contract to hold the 2023 Expo in Charlotte, North Carolina.

In his government affairs committee report, Mike Hopsicker noted that the association has continued to advocate for critical industry issues while also addressing the impacts of COVID-19.

“It’s been an eventful four months since we last met,” the committee chair said. “There was the contentious election campaign, and now, one party controls both chambers of Congress and the White House.”

Hopsicker said the top two categories of bills the association has been addressing have to do with the decarbonization and “electrify everything” movement and the states’ response to COVID-19. Among the resources members can use to deal with these challenges are the Propane Days 365 online toolkit and the COVID-19 section of NPGA’s website. Both are available at npga.org.

In his propane supply and logistics committee report, Steve Kossuth reported that the committee continues to meet monthly and monitor the status of supply in the industry. “There have been no major issues as of yet, but we are not resting on our laurels,” Kossuth said. He highlighted NPGA’s development of a repository of hours-of-service waivers, an “ABCs of Supply Preparation” document, an archive of “Preparing for Peak Demand” webinars and the Propane Logistics Analysis Network (PLAN) website and app.

“These are wonderful, proactive measures to keep our industry prepared,” Kossuth said. The first three are available to members at npga.org. Visit the PLAN website at plan.npga.org, and the PLAN app can be accessed through the NPGAction app, which is available in the Apple App Store or the Google Play Store.

This was the third NPGA board meeting held virtually. The next board meeting is scheduled to be held in person on June 7, 2021, in Washington, D.C., in conjunction with Propane Days. If Capitol Hill is not open at that time, NPGA plans to invite legislators to meet with association members elsewhere. As he concluded his president’s report, Kaminski said, “With the vaccine rollout, I am cautiously optimistic that we will meet in person in June.” ■

Steve Relyea has written for B2B publications for more than 30 years. He has specialized in reporting on skilled trades, small businesses and entrepreneurs.





WHAT'S NEXT FOR AUTOGAS

The tech, policies and people pushing propane equipment into the mainstream

PAT THORNTON

"It's been a challenging year with COVID-19," said Steve Whaley, director of autogas business development at the Propane Education & Research Council (PERC). "Nonetheless, it really hasn't slowed our progress with propane autogas. There is much to be excited about, considering both the new gallons being used for autogas as well as the great potential in the years ahead."

Whaley and propane autogas advocates have been sidelined from many conventions and meetings due to COVID-19-related cancellations over the past year. The latest cancellation was the annual Work Truck Show, typically held in March by NTEA, the association for the work truck industry, in Indianapolis, Indiana.

"We are working on one of the largest and greatest projects with the most potential to dramatically increase use of propane gallons in the United States," Whaley said. "We are currently negotiating with Cummins, the second largest manufacturer of engines in the world, on the $12 million funding request approved by the council at the December meeting."

THE CUMMINS ENGINE PROJECT

Cummins will work in partnership with PERC to commercialize a propane engine that has already been developed and optimized for high efficiency and near-zero emissions operating on propane.

The summary states that the propane-powered engine will bring unparalleled performance to the medium-duty vehicle market while also providing a pathway to a high-performing engine for off-road applications. The new engine would launch in 2024 based on the proposed timeline.

"This engine will provide a more cost-effective and environmentally friendly solution, which could displace 60 billion gallons of diesel gas currently used to fuel medium-duty vehicles," Whaley said. "This engine has better horsepower and better torque without diesel. There will be more environmental restrictions in 2024 and even more in 2027. Companies like Roush CleanTech and PSI are already able to meet the 2027 restrictions."



7.3 V8 Ford Engine

Whaley would be excited to just displace 20 billion gallons a year. "That would be 20 billion gallons we don't have to export to foreign destinations each year. We're super excited and want to launch this right now," he said.

OUTPACING ELECTRIC IN LOWERING CARBON FOOTPRINT IN TRUCKS

In late January, PERC released a comparative analysis showing propane-fueled medium- and heavy-duty engine vehicles provide a lower carbon footprint than electric vehicles in 38 U.S. states and Washington D.C. Fifteen states and Washington D.C. have proposed full electrification of medium- and heavy-duty trucks by 2050 with a target of 30% "zero emission" vehicle sales by 2030.

The rationale behind the proposals is based on exhaust carbon dioxide (CO_2eq) emissions alone as opposed to life-cycle analysis results that miss the full picture. Policy

proposals today conflate the promise of electrification with actual decarbonization.

The comparative analysis also reveals that the medium- and heavy-duty vehicles powered by renewable propane provide a lower carbon footprint solution in every U.S. state except Vermont, where electricity is generated by and imported from Canadian hydroelectric power plants. Renewable propane is derived from sources such as beef fats, vegetable oils, grease residue and other biomass feedstocks.

The analysis makes the case that decarbonization can be accelerated by adopting propane as the fuel of choice for medium- and heavy-duty vehicles. "It is often assumed that full electrification of all sectors will lead to their full decarbonization, but little thought on how electricity is currently generated, stored, transmitted and consumed has been considered," said the author, Dr. Gokul Vishwanathan, director of research and sustainability at PERC. "While a full renewable-based electric grid is not feasible anytime soon, propane is an effective solution today for accelerating decarbonization of transportation and other energy sectors."

The comparable analysis presented the following decarbonization recommendations:

- All 50 states should aggressively invest resources in incentivizing renewable fuels.
- Federal government agencies, particularly the Department of Energy, should aggressively invest in various parallel pathways for renewable and synthetic fuel production to ensure supply.
- The U.S. should pursue available decarbonization efforts using alternative fuels, such as propane and dimethyl ether (DME), rather than wait on grid infrastructure improvements that are decades away from realization.

THE POTENTIAL FOR CLASS 3 TO 7 TRUCKS

"Propane owns the Class 3 to 7 truck market," Whaley said. "We've seen huge growth in propane school buses, which consume an average of 260 gallons per month. Looking ahead, we see potential with parashuttles, which use an average of 600 gallons per month. There is plenty of potential with food and beverage trucks which use an average of 450 gallons per month. Parcel package trucks, such as FedEx, UPS and the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) trucks, which use an average of 1,000 gallons per month due to their schedule of 6 ½ days of use a week and 52 weeks a year, also represent a large amount of potential."

Todd Mouw, president of Roush CleanTech (Livonia, Michigan) agrees with Whaley on the growth potential in the areas that he mentioned. "There is significant opportunity in the parcel delivery segment," said Mouw. "There are more than 10,000 Class 6-7 trucks that perform this function across the various USPS contractors. The growing 'push'



Autogas tank and station installation at Pinellas County Schools in St. Petersburg, Florida


Ford F-750 equipped with Roush CleanTech Gen 5 propane fuel system

from the new [Biden] administration to move cleaner transportation models puts Roush and the propane industry in an ideal position to support."

Roush experienced success building eight propane-powered trucks for McAbee Trucking, a third-party delivery company for the USPS, a little over a year ago. "The feedback has been positive," Mouw said. "We like it when an operator says the transition has been seamless. That means our team is doing a great job in supporting our customer from start to finish."

"The school bus market continues to be the shining star of our collective efforts," Mouw said. "Obviously COVID-19 slowed some of the growth in the short term, but there is still a ton of pent-up demand driven by a large volume of older school buses that are in dire need of replacement. Couple that with a large pot of funding that still remains from the Volkswagon emissions scandal and the new administration's push for clean transportation, and the future for propane in the student transportation segment is bright."

Mouw noted that Roush recently unveiled the new Ford 7.3L engine in the Blue Bird Type C school bus. "Production began on the Generation 5 propane autogas fuel system

at Roush CleanTech last week," he said. "The outgoing 6.8L engine has been a fantastic and durable solution, and the 7.3L continues to raise the bar on performance, cost savings, emissions reduction and serviceability. Ford spent a lot of research and development funds to develop this new engine. We are starting with a high-quality, high-volume engine that powers most of Ford's commercial lineup."

"Couple that with our decade plus of experience in designing, manufacturing, selling and servicing propane fuel systems and we have created a seamless solution that delivers a lot of power and torque without compromising fuel economy," Mouw said. "Ford is committed to this market by offering the gasoline prep package for propane and CNG. "Combining that with the $15 million investment that Roush and Blue Bird made to this product should be a strong signal to the industry."

Mouw also said that Ford will be offering air brakes on the F-650/750 platform late this year.

"This should help marketers make the transition from diesel to propane for their bobtails, tank setters and cylinder exchange trucks," he said. "We are also excited about PERC's focus to help the industry adopt new technology in their own fleets. As a thank you to the industry for the investment and support over the years, we are offering a $1,000 rebate per truck for any offerings that a marketer wants to purchase. Running a fleet on propane autogas provides lower fuel costs and total cost of ownership while proving to customers how much propane retailers trust their own fuel."

At Blossman Services (Swannanoa, North Carolina; the distribution partner for Alliance AutoGas Systems), President Ed Hoffman said propane-powered pick-up trucks and other service trucks have been popular in 2020.

"Our best seller has been the Ford F-150 in 2020," Hoffman said. "The Ford 6.2L engine and the GM 6.6L engine have been adopted widely in the industry. Later this year, we plan to introduce a certified propane-powered RAM truck. Retailer propane buyers have been co-ops and larger regional players among others. Adoption of propane autogas has continued to be consistent. Regionally, the Northeast has stepped up quite a bit and we have done a lot of business in the Great Lake region."

IMPROVEMENTS TO DISPENSING SYSTEMS

"Fleets that have implemented the K-15 nozzle have seen an increase in safety, performance and ease of use and a decrease in fugitive emissions," said Crystelle Markley, marketing director for Superior Energy Systems. "The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) now mandates that all autogas vehicles include the K-15 adapter for fueling, which has increased availability of the nozzles. Superior



Energy Systems has witnessed fleets that previously had vehicles with both standard (threaded/Acme) and K-15 (Euro) refueling capabilities convert all vehicles to K-15 due to the functionality. The nozzle is also easy to maintain, requiring only monthly spray lubrication."

"In 2020, Superior Energy Systems received retail certification for our propane autogas dispensers by the National Type Evaluation Program (NTEP)," Markley said. He added that "the certification allows our company to sell autogas dispensers to customers who wish to install them in a public setting for full retail use. The retail certification comes as Superior Energy Systems continues to advance our autogas refueling technology."

Markley said the new onboard diagnostics offer enhanced service capability and increased reliability with Superior Energy Systems' own, in-house software, which does not rely on third-party support. "These features allow for affordable, reliable and advanced refueling for autogas wholesale fleet and retail customers throughout North America. The certification also allows fleet customers the ability to offer retail refueling at their locations, increasing profit as well as autogas usage."

Markley said that autogas installations have slowed some during the pandemic due to students learning remotely across much of the country, but they are once again starting to see an increase in those installations across the country.

CHANGES TO AUTOGAS TRAINING

"No doubt — 2020 was a challenging year for everyone, both personally and professionally," Mouw said. "That being said, I think it gave us a chance to pause and reassess our strategy and technology road map to ensure we were bringing high value to our partners and customers. It also allowed us to revisit how we educate, consult and market to our partners and gave us time to create some great virtual tools that don't always require an airplane trip to address."

"We have invested a lot of Jack Roush's money over the past few years on technology to help scale training for technicians, drivers and first responders," Mouw continued. "We offer a significant suite of solutions that range from web-based to in-person training to ensure fleets are comfortable in making the transition to a new energy source, such as propane autogas. We offer complimentary web-based training modules, live virtual training sessions with our team members and in-person training." ■

Pat Thornton is a 25-year veteran of the propane industry, with 20 years at Propane Resources and 5 years at Butane-Propane News. He has served on the PERC Safety & Training Advisory Committee and the Missouri PERC Board of Directors.



Superior Energy Systems

THE ORIGINAL IS STILL
THE BEST

- **New onboard diagnostics** offer enhanced service capability
- **Increased reliability** with Superior's own, in-house software which does not rely on third party support
- **Affordable, dependable, and advanced** refueling for autogas wholesale fleet and retail customers across North America

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4 TIPS TO HELP YOUR TEAM NAVIGATE A REMOTE-WORK ENVIRONMENT

How to assist your office employees in finding a better balance and setting clear boundaries

ROBERT GLAZER

We may look back on 2020 as the most crucial year in the remote work revolution. Millions of workers are now doing their jobs from home, and companies as large as Twitter have already announced employees never have to return to the office. The future of business is here, and it is increasingly virtual. To help your organization stay ahead of the curve, you need the principles, tactics and tools to empower your team to excel in a remote world.

There's a common misconception that people who work from home are not accountable and are prone to letting their home-life distractions spill over into their work. However, for many remote workers, the opposite is far more often the case.

Some remote employees find it difficult to set clear boundaries that separate work from their personal lives. They struggle to unplug, take breaks, recharge or decompress at the end of the workday.

Sometimes, those same employees even struggle to end their workday, leaving their laptop on their bedside table so they can check email one last time before bed.

To address this challenge, it's imperative that you emphasize and train your employees on the importance of setting boundaries—particularly with respect to managing time and workspaces. And if you're working from home, too, you should set the same boundaries for yourself.

1. SET A SCHEDULE

First, it's important to keep a structured schedule and be intentional about how time is used. Push yourself to set a



consistent wake-up time. Determine what range of hours you will be working during the day and proactively plan to reserve time for projects and meetings, lunch, exercise and personal time. Schedule breaks into your day and stick to those break times.

There are several built-in breaks for people who work in traditional offices—things like chatting with coworkers at the water cooler, taking a coffee break, or going out to pick up lunch.

In contrast, remote employees can easily burrow into their work for several hours without even realizing how much of the day has gone by. By setting a schedule and following it, remote employees can ensure they have time to get their work done, but also take time to rest and reset during the day.

2. MANAGE YOUR ENERGY

It's also important to manage energy and keep yourself from burning out from too much uninterrupted work.

As mentioned above, it can be easy to dive deep into work, not get up from your desk for hours, and exhaust yourself in the process. You will get a lot done in those hours, but you're also likely to hamper your performance for the rest of the day.

When you build your schedule, it's good to mix and match different types of activities along with preplanned breaks. Also, take notice of when your energy peaks and wanes. In the fitness world, there's a widespread practice of interval training: strong bursts of rigorous exercise followed by a brief period of rest.

This builds your strength and stamina without overexerting your body. Interval training can be applied to mental tasks as well—it's important to separate periods of mentally strenuous work with short breaks to ensure you don't burn out. This could involve scheduling periods of intense work in the morning when you are often cognitively strongest. Then, follow that with a

By setting a schedule and following it, remote employees can ensure they have time to get their work done, but also take time to rest and reset during the day.

break and reserve the afternoon for meetings and tasks that are discussion-oriented and don't require as much mental capacity and acute focus. It's important to set a similar regimen for yourself and spend some time deciding which parts of the day are best for you to perform different types of tasks.

3. SEPARATE YOUR WORKSPACE

Physical boundaries are also very important. Encourage your employees to have a place in their home that is specifically designated for work. This not only helps you mentally delineate work time, but it also signals to other people in your home when you are available and when you're not.

This is especially important because a person's partner or children might believe that because they are visible, they're available.

They may be tempted to walk in and ask a question without realizing you're actually in the middle of a sales pitch or on a client call. It's hard for others to realize you're working before it's too late, but setting aside a designated space for work helps avoid this confusion. For most employees, physical separation is easier said than done, especially for people who weren't expecting to be working from home.

Not everybody has a room in their home they can designate as an office. In those cases, even setting up a folding table in the corner of the living room or designating a chair at the kitchen table as an "office chair" is a step toward creating a mental and physical boundary.

4. END YOUR WORKDAY WITH A BUFFER

It's also helpful to create buffers at the beginning and end of the designated workday, similar to what you would experience with a typical commute to work. It's not a good idea to roll out of bed and immediately open your laptop and dive into work emails. Encourage your people to set a morning routine—have coffee, eat breakfast, read the paper or do a morning workout.

Then, when you start work, you will feel engaged and clear-headed, rather than beginning your day feeling stressed about needing to jump out of bed and start completing tasks.

At the end of the day, it's just as important to decompress before stepping back into your home life. Commuting can be a pain, but we often underestimate how much that time helps us mentally separate from work on the way home.

Your usual playbook for the office won't work perfectly in a remote environment. But using this advice, both you and your employees can end the workday feeling more accomplished and much less worn down. ■

Robert Glazer is the founder and chief executive officer of Acceleration Partners, a completely remote partner marketing agency ranked No. 4 on Glassdoor's Best Places to Work. Glazer was also named twice to Glassdoor's list of Top CEOs of Small and Medium Companies in the United States and was named one of Conscious Company's top 22 conscious business leaders. He is a member of Marshall Goldsmith's 100 Coaches initiative. A Wall Street Journal and USA Today best-selling author, his book, "Elevate," is available now. He will be releasing his newest title, "How to Thrive in the Virtual Workplace" in June 2021. Visit accelerationpartners.com.

9 TOOLS TO IMPROVE THE REACH OF YOUR BOBTAILS

Industry innovators on how their product offerings are evolving to meet today's propane needs

STEVE RELYEA

Easier maintenance. Longer-lasting components. Better performance in difficult environments. Greater versatility. Improved safety. These are just a few of the benefits that can be delivered by equipment available for today's bobtails.

As the industry's primary workhorses, bobtails need to be equipped to do their job well. Suppliers of components for these trucks are constantly developing new solutions that improve upon what's currently available.

In the following article, representatives of nine companies that supply equipment to the builders and operators of bobtails shared details about the ways their offerings can improve the capabilities of these trucks.

DAVIS AIRTECH

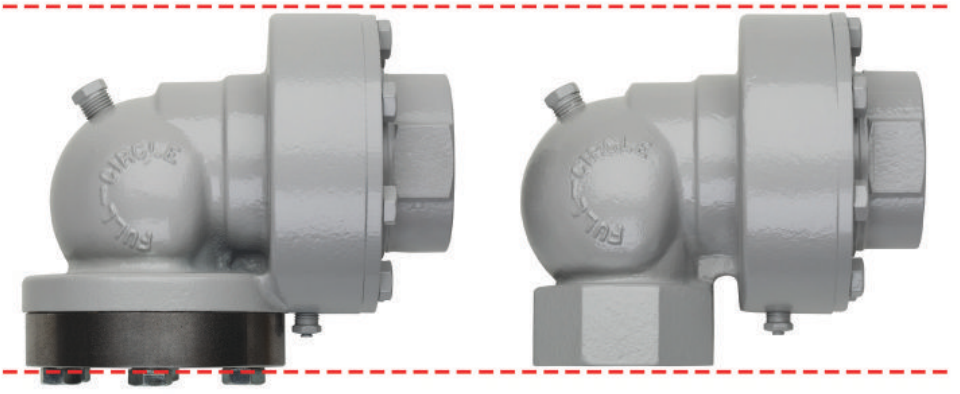
"Not all marketers and suppliers have embraced the computerized technology that most trucks are currently equipped with," said Landon Webster, sales manager at Davis Airtech (Conyers, Georgia). Davis Airtech bridges the gap by remanufacturing Veeder Root and Neptune mechanical registers and ticket printers for bobtail trucks, propane dispensers and loading racks.



Davis Airtech remanufactures Veeder Root and Neptune mechanical registers and ticket printers for bobtail trucks, propane dispensers and loading racks.

The company provides National Conference on Weights and Measures (NCWM) certified, National Type Evaluation Program (NTEP) listed mechanical registers on an exchange basis with a one-year warranty.

"Many bottle fillers and retail locations also use the mechanical type of registration for inventory or sales, and we service that area of the propane industry as well," Webster said. "Despite the digital age of measurement and calibration, there will always be a demand for analog registration in some way. Davis Airtech serves the role of furnishing those items in that market."



Full-Circle's flanged connection swivel (left) and FNPT threaded connection swivel (right) have identical centerline and external dimensions.

FULL-CIRCLE INC.

Full-Circle Inc. (Newbury Park, California) now offers a flanged connection option for hose reel use on bobtails. Introduced last year, the flanged connection swivel is a bolt-in replacement for Full-Circle's female national pipe thread (FNPT) threaded connection swivel.

Both swivels have identical centerline and external dimensions, so customers can change from an FNPT connection to a flanged connection without redesigning the rest of the pipework.

"The flanged option allows for more flexibility in regard to the swivel inlet pipework design for bobtail delivery trucks," said C.J. Smith, vice president of operations. "It's an alternative design; we will continue to offer the FNPT connection first made available in 1993."

The flanges are machined from bar stock and are available in 1-1/2-inch or 2-inch threaded, socket-weld or butt-weld versions. They're also available in stainless steel. Like the company's original swivel, the new alternative design is Underwriters Laboratories (UL) listed. It also features a mechanical seal. "Like all our swivel models, there is no greasing or lubrication required," Smith said.

HANNAY REELS

Bobtail delivery hoses are easily damaged if they are wound unevenly or if they rub against the edges of cabinets and other obstructions while being reeled in. That's why Hannay LP gas reels with the Guidemaster arm are a standard in the industry. Manufactured by Hannay Reels (Westerlo, New York), the Guidemaster gives the operator more control while reeling in the hose and guiding it onto the reel.

This reel package makes the job easier and protects the hose. The Hannay Guidemaster arm swivels 180 degrees to guide the hose to where the fuel needs to be delivered. When the delivery is complete, the reel neatly stores the hose, keeps it readily available and lengthens the life of the hose by reducing dragging and kinking.



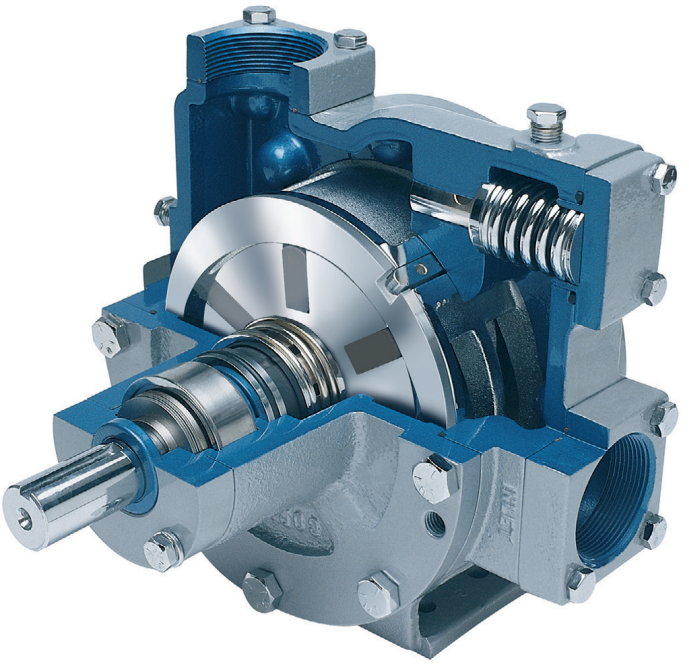
Hannay Reels' LP gas reels with the Guidemaster arm give the operator more control while reeling in the hose and guiding it onto the reel.

"Hannay Reels provide faster, easier rewind and a more uniform wind on the reel," said Jennifer Wing, marketing manager. "The Guidemaster guides the hose onto the reel better than what can be done by hand. This helps avoid damage, saves time and is safer for the operator."

The Guidemaster was patented in the 1950s. Today, it is a standard accessory on Hannay's LP gas reels. "Our business began in the fuel market in 1933, with kerosene delivery," Wing said.

The current Guidemaster, the GM-X, was introduced in 2019. Improvements include a main body constructed of Grade 303 stainless steel with a black powder coat finish, a one-piece weldment and hourglass rollers made from ZAMAK material.

Previously, the main body and the hourglass rollers were made from aluminum. "This new version released two years ago has rollers with a special material that are much more wear-resistant," Wing said.



IDEX Corp.'s Corken Z-series pumps offer superior durability due to the patented thrust bearing and silicon carbide seals.

IDEX CORPORATION

IDEX Corp. (Northbrook, Illinois) offers benefits to bobtail manufacturers and operators through the sale of both Corken pumps and Liquid Controls metering technologies.

"The strong track record for reliability and performance has made sliding vane pumps like Corken and LC-style meters the go-to solutions for the domestic market today," said Steven Willoughby, global business director, IDEX Energy, Advanced

meters the go-to solutions for the domestic market today," said Steven Willoughby, global business director, IDEX Energy, Advanced Flow Solutions.

Corken Z-series pumps offer superior durability due to the combination of a patented thrust bearing that protects the internals and silicon carbide seals that dissipate heat and protect against face damage due to running dry.

"The thrust bearing protects the inside of the pump if the pump is not well-maintained," Willoughby said. "The silicon carbide seals help protect the pump against running dry. No propane marketer plans to do that, but it does happen."

Liquid Controls meters have been the standard for liquid propane gas bobtails for over 25 years, he said, due to their trirotor design, which offers low wear and sustained accuracy. Liquid Controls also offers several options for registers.

"Our newest register, the LCR.iQ, is much more than a typical register; it acts as a centralized data controller for a truck," Willloughby said. "The LCR.iQ is designed with a big, bright screen that is easy to see and read. It is also highly configurable in terms of what is shown on the screen as you do different operations."



Jomar Valve has added new configurations of one of its popular propane truck valves: the T-SS-1000N-4B.

It also allows direct wireless connections to third-party systems while integrating with a variety of on-truck sensors, including tank levels.

JOMAR VALVE

Jomar Valve (Warren, Michigan) has added new configurations of one of its popular propane truck valves. "We took our existing T-SS-1000N-4B valve platform, which was already widely used on bobtails and made it even better for our customers," said Adam Stier, president.

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The company added several new configurations with different accessory ports and end connections that are helpful to the end-user, he said. These include a square flange and an added port that can be used for connecting hydrostatic relief and/or bleed lines.

"The new line of T-SS-1000N-4B Propane Truck Valves are now available in configurations that provide the ability to add drains and hydrostatic relief in a space-saving and labor reducing manner," Stier said. "Further, the new Jomar square flange adapter allows quick and easy installation without welding or threading and is compatible with other square flange patterns existing on the market."

These new-generation products also maintain the features and benefits of the original unit. "As compared to multiturn globe valves with lower flow capacities, the Jomar Valve T-SS-1000N-4B Propane Truck Valve series is a full port, 100% flow, quarter-turn solution," Stier said. "Additionally, most globe valves used in the propane market are ductile iron, whereas Jomar Propane Truck Valves are 100% stainless steel. They're also 100% tested and 100% repairable."

MARSHALL EXCELSIOR CO.

When a bobtail is set up to deliver propane to a residential tank at 60 gallons per minute, it's difficult to fill a customer's forklift cylinder that holds only 7.5 gallons. It can overfill very quickly. Marshall Excelsior Co. (MEC; Marshall, Michigan) offers a solution that enables the bobtail to do both deliveries equally well. It also allows a bobtail to self-load. "The Versa-Fill adjustable bypass valve adds some options to the back of the bobtail that aren't always there," said Mike Tartaglia, sales application engineer.



Marshall Excelsior's Versa-Fill adjustable bypass valve includes a Forklift fill mode and a self-load mode.

The Versa Fill features three settings and functions. In normal bypass mode, it functions just like MEC's standard ME840 series bypass valve. During domestic tank deliveries, it pushes maximum pump output to the hose end delivery nozzle while protecting the pump if the nozzle is closed during delivery.

In small cylinder/forklift fill mode, a built-in, fully adjustable proportional flow control valve allows a portion of flow from the pump to be diverted back to the tank in order to reduce the flow rate at the hose end delivery nozzle. "You can drop

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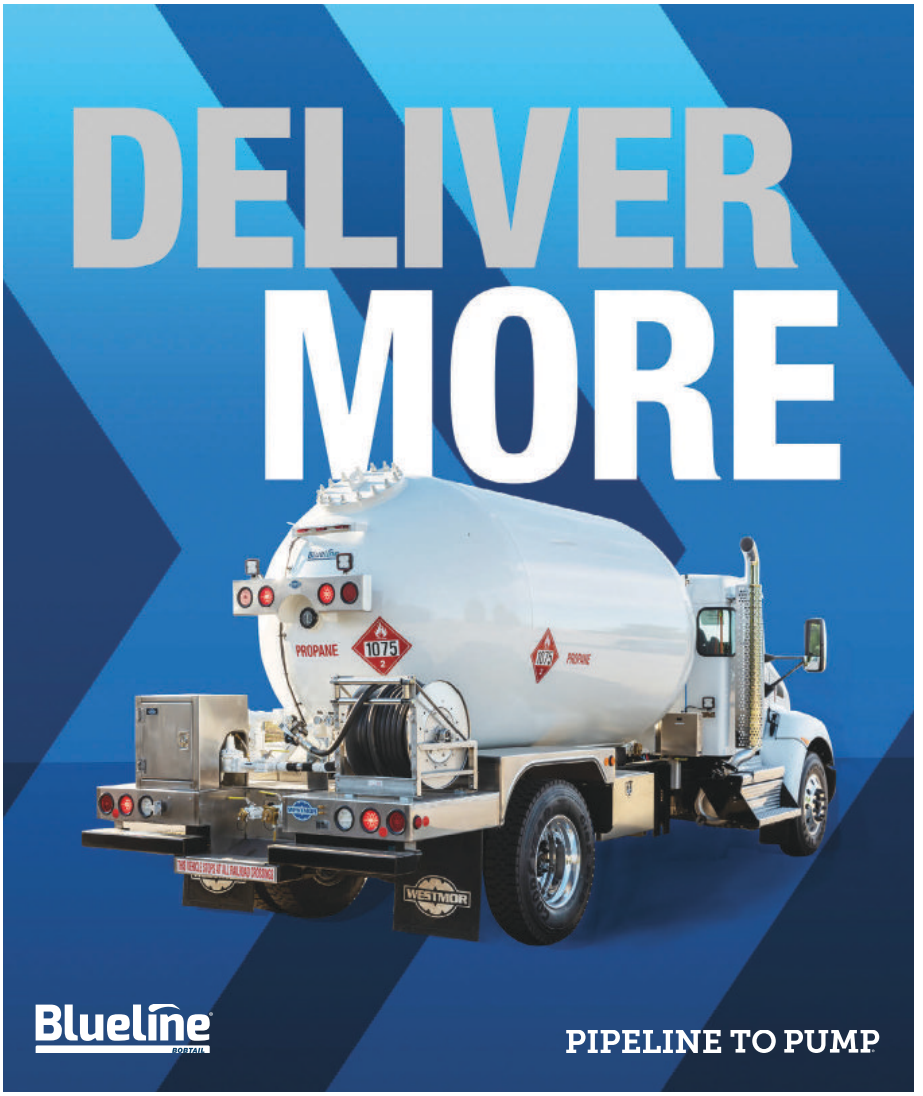
Pro-Vision Video Systems' Hybrid Mobile Digital Video Recorder System adds more coverage in and around the vehicle than a backup camera and provides a video record.

down the gallons per minute to anywhere you want, so it's safer and much more manageable when filling a forklift cylinder," Tartaglia said.

In auxiliary suction evacuation/self-load mode, the Versa-Fill allows for 100% of pump flow to be diverted through a built-in full port flow control valve. This permits the pump suction inlet to be used for tank evacuation or self-loading without secondary manual load loop piping.

"If the plant has no power, you can use the bobtail to fill the tank, even if the bobtail doesn't have the extra plumbing," Tartaglia said. Versa-Fill is a drop-in replacement for all standard bypass valves.



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PRO-VISION VIDEO SYSTEMS

Bobtail drivers face many challenges while making deliveries. Among them are blind spots and false claims from other drivers or even customers.

Pro-Vision Video Systems (Byron Center, Michigan) offers solutions. The company's Hybrid Mobile Digital Video Recorder (MDVR) System adds more coverage in and around the vehicle than a backup camera and also provides a video record.

"Having an MDVR system combining observation and recording in one solution gives the best of all worlds, in addition to being able to add sensors as part of a solution," said Greg Buckner, communications manager. He provided three examples of problems this combination can solve:

1. The system gives drivers the ability to monitor their surroundings, including blind spots, to avoid accidents.

2. With the video record, propane marketers can disprove false claims and exonerate drivers in the event of an accident.

3. The video record provides proof of service. If a customer claims they were charged for a delivery they didn't receive, propane marketers can pull video from the MDVR.

Pro-Vision also offers a cloud services subscription that enables fleet managers to view their vehicles remotely. When this is added, the MDVR can also support live GPS tracking, speed detection and vehicle condition monitoring. "With these abilities, fleet managers can be fully aware of what's going on with their fleet

vehicles and quickly address any potential issues that come up," Buckner said.

ROCHESTER GAUGES

To determine how much propane is in the tank of their bobtail, drivers must calculate the temperature-compensated volume level. Rochester Gauges (Dallas, Texas) offers a suite of products that eliminates that step and allows drivers to simply look at their handheld device. When equipped with all three products, drivers can get that accurate reading from anywhere within the range of a Bluetooth signal.



Rochester Gauges' e-Dial features a display and two independent alarm levels that can be programmed by the user.

"With these options providing the temperature-compensated liquid levels, e-Dial eliminates the need for the driver to calculate the tank content left in the bobtail," said Sam Fung, product manager. "Drivers can also see the liquid level without having to go to the back of the bobtail to look at the gauge. It transmits it to their handheld device, so they can see it in the cab."

The suite of products includes the e-Dial, e-Temp Sensor and e-Dial App. The e-Dial electronic dial is a digital gauge indicator. To get the temperature compensated volume level of tank contents, users need only enter the current tank content temperature.

The e-Dial also features a digital display and two independent level alarms that can be programmed by the user. The e-Dial retrofits any existing Magnetel and Taylor gauges.

The e-Temp Sensor retrofits on existing quarter-inch thermowells on existing tanks and eliminates the need to manually enter the tank content temperature. When paired with the e-Dial, it provides a continuous temperature-compensated liquid level.

The e-Dial App allows users to set up the e-Dial and enables liquid levels to be transmitted wirelessly through Bluetooth.

TOTAL CONTROL SYSTEMS

Total Control Systems (TCS; Fort Wayne, Indiana) reports it has recently seen rapid growth in the propane market segment. Among the solutions the company offers for propane distributors are a bobtail meter, an electronic register and an entry-level data collection package.

The TCS 700 series two-inch bobtail meter has become standard for several fleets in North America, according to Darren Eavis, business development





Total Control Systems' TCS 3000 electronic register features a large color display that allows optimal viewing from all angles.

manager. "It comes standard with an industry-leading warranty and customer service second to none," he said.

Another of the company's solutions, the TCS 3000 electronic register, was designed with the operator and the OEM in mind. The register is available in several mounting configurations; its large color display allows optimal viewing from all angles; and its heated screen and backlit keypad eliminate the worry of night and cold weather operation.

"The TCS 3000 is capable of simple pump-and-print deliveries or, when paired with various modems, can easily go above and beyond standard meter register capabilities," Eavis said. "Internal Wi-Fi or cellular modems and external Wi-Fi, cellular or Bluetooth modems are currently being used in many applications."

TCS also offers an entry-level data collection package called the TCS Hub. Before starting a delivery, drivers can be prompted on the TCS 3000 to enter up to four fields of data.

Employee ID number and customer account numbers, for example, can be captured and sent to the head office with the delivery information to be posted manually or automatically as soon as a delivery is complete.

"This allows office staff to be more efficient throughout the day and not have to spend late evening or early mornings entering delivery tickets," Eavis said. ■

Steve Relyea has written for B2B publications for more than 30 years. He has specialized in reporting on skilled trades, small businesses and entrepreneurs.



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ANOVA UNIVERSAL TANK MONITOR

This month hails another industry-first innovation from Anova, who announced the Anova Universal Tank Monitor (UTM) for fuel distributors globally. The Anova UTM meets the demand for a global, affordable tank monitor that works with multiple tanks simultaneously and future-proofs communications by working over a wide variety of communication networks and carriers, including LTE CAT-M1, automatically switching to the strongest network signal. Intrinsically safe, Anova UTM eases the path to profitability in fuel distribution and works seamlessly with Anova's advanced, trusted technology, powerful software analytics and slick mobile apps. The Anova UTM is also available without any capital outlay through the company's hardware-as-a-service monthly subscription offering. Visit anova.com.



BLOSSMAN GAS WARM FRONT WINDOW HEATER



The Warm Front Window Heater, a new zone heating product that provides portable heat to spaces up 1,000 square feet. Modeled after window air conditioning units, the heater is an innovative solution for spaces where an open flame heater is not recommended and is ideal for mobile, modular or manufactured homes, workshops, garages, hunting or fishing camps, or any other space needing a portable heating solution.

Fitting any standard size window, the propane-fueled window heater is easy to install and only requires basic tools. The heater connects to a portable propane cylinder outside of the installation window, which users will find similar to connecting to a gas grill. It is equipped with a touch-screen thermostat for temperature control, and its quiet operation makes it a suitable source of heat for even the quietest spaces in your home. Additional features include:

- Fuel supply that can connect to a propane cylinder (hose attached)
- Zero clearance to combustibles
- An 82% efficiency rate
- A touch-screen thermostat with on/off-temperature and dimmer bar

Retailing for $899, Warm Front heaters can currently be purchased at Blossman Gas locations throughout the Southeast and Mid-Atlantic. Visit blossmangas.com.

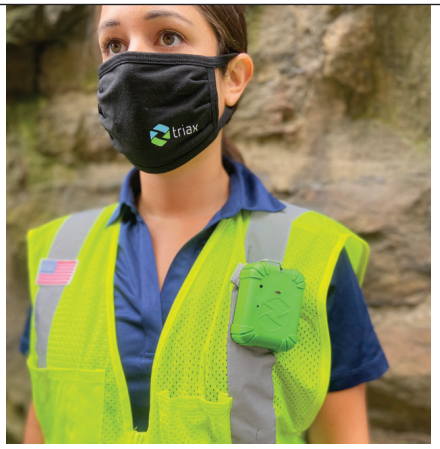
VALVTECT LUMIN ADVANCED LPG FILTRATION SYSTEM

ValvTect has launched Lumin LPG Filters. Lumin LPG Filters represent the leading advancements in the market for LPG filtration systems. They are the only Underwriters Laboratories (UL) certified propane filters available in the United States and Canada with a EU certification, assuring these products can be used globally.

A specially designed filter delivers premium filtration performance, removing up to 95.5% of impurities as low as 5 microns or less. This includes tank scale, particulates, water and heavy end oil.

The filters are available in three different sizes (3/8" NPT, 1" NPT and 2" NPT) and can be used for a variety of applications including tank farms, metal processing, transport terminals, chemical production, power generation, agribusiness, auto gas dispensers, forklifts and OEM manufacturers. Visit valvtect.com.





TRIAX TECHNOLOGIES PROXIMITY TRACE

In response to the need for greater worker protection during the COVID-19 pandemic, Triax Technologies Inc. announced a new Internet of Things system, Proximity Trace. The new solution provides proximity distancing alerts and contact tracing through a wearable device for workers across many industries, including construction, energy and manufacturing.

The Proximity Trace devices are affixed to safety gear or worn clipped on the body and emit a progressively louder alarm, alerting workers when they are too close to each other.

In the event that there is a confirmed case of COVID-19, an employer can conduct contact tracing using historical data captured passively by the worker's device to identify who may have been exposed.

Proximity Trace supports appropriate social distancing guidelines as outlined by government agencies. It can be used alongside an organization's internal policies on social distancing and other safety guidelines.

The product is undergoing field testing, and key feedback from early customers will be incorporated into production for commercial availability. Visit triaxtec.com.

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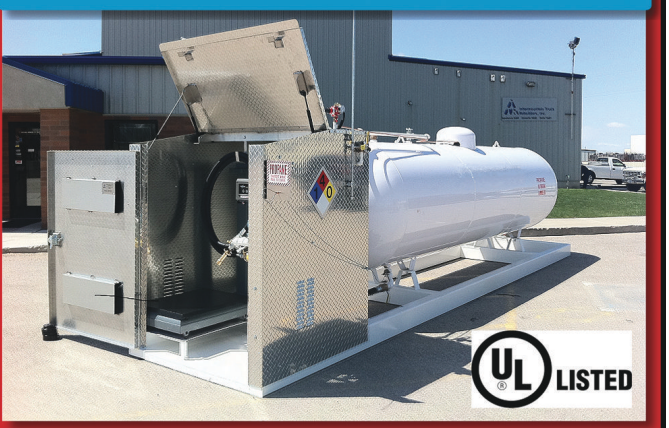

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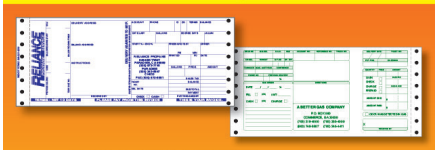

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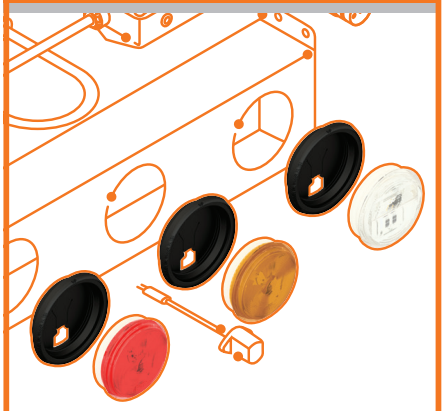

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KIM FURPHY UNDERSTANDS HR IS 'NOT JUST THE WARM AND FUZZY'

KAREN MASSMAN VANASDALE

With degrees in accounting and information technology, Kim Furphy began her career in the membership services department at Prodigy Communications. She quickly transitioned into the human resources (HR) department primarily because "they thought I was good on the phones, and I might be able to handle the customer service."

It was a life-altering move. Today, Furphy is director of HR at Paraco Gas Corporation headquartered in Rye Brook, New York, where she handles human resources for approximately 400 employees across five states.

"Once you get into human resources, you realize all of the various pieces and components, laws and compliance issues, and the things you need to do to look out for people," she said. "Then you kind of go — all right, maybe it is a little bit more than just talking to people and getting them enrolled in medical benefits. It's not just the warm and fuzzy, exactly," Furphy said.

She credits her incredible mentor at Prodigy, whose knowledge and wisdom continues to guide her. "He had an approach that set my mentality and my thought process even now," Furphy said. "He taught me it's not all about doing it our way. It's about being able to provide guidance and insight and making sure people have all the information they need to make the right decisions."

After eight years at Prodigy, she followed her mentor to a supply chain software company, then moved to work for a government contractor that developed software for the United States Department of Defense. Her next two stints were working in HR for a construction company in Manhattan, New York and then Zachys Fine Wines, an international fine wine retailer and auctioneer with offices in New York, New York, and Hong Kong.



When changes were underway at Zachys, Furphy sought a similar opportunity to make a difference at a family-owned company and landed at Paraco two years ago. One of the largest privately held marketers in New York and one of the top regional marketers in the Northeast, the company supplies propane to residential, commercial and wholesale markets in New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Vermont, Rhode Island, New Hampshire and Maine.

Moving to Paraco was a big change because of the size and industry, she said, but the challenge and opportunity to make an impact was very appealing. "You know, policies are policies. It's really about learning how we apply them to our employees here at Paraco," Furphy said. "I've never been a slave to one particular industry, so I find it very easy to switch. The more I learn about the industry, the easier it is for me to understand the people I support.

"I think energy — you get the picture of the guys lugging the hose or turning the wrench on the oil rigs and stuff. That's where your head goes. As I got more deeply entrenched in this industry, I see how valuable it is," she said.

When Furphy is not balancing the challenges and opportunities of Paraco, she is at home with her three sons, her husband — who has his own carpentry business — four cats, and two dogs. "I think the one thing that the pandemic has done for me is I've always enjoyed cooking, but now that I'm home, and I'm cooking for five almost every night, I'm definitely exploring more on that front," she said.

Originally from Massachusetts and Maine, Furphy describes herself as a New England girl. She lives about 45 minutes outside of New York City, which is the best of both worlds — although she admits she doesn't have a lot of downtime to spend in the city.

"People ask me what I do on the weekends, and it's like, well, you know what? I'm around people so much during the week that I kind of like to stay home. I keep my circle small. I am a big family person, and I enjoy hanging with my kids and love to work around the house," Furphy said. "My mom passed away a few years ago, so I have her house up in Maine that we're going to eventually retire in. We go up there a lot just to make sure it is still standing, and because we're still cleaning out her stuff."

While retirement is not in her near future, Furphy is embracing the opportunities at Paraco and hopes it will be her last career stop. ■

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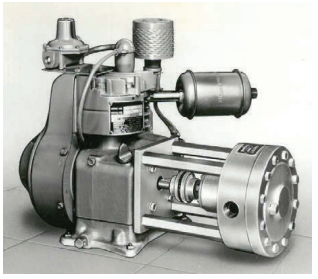

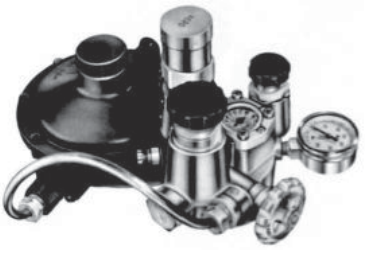
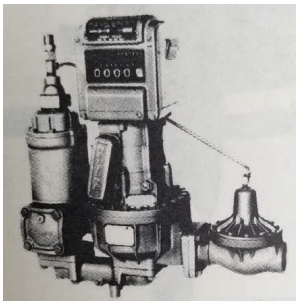

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