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Dear Readers and Industry Partners,

Hope you are well! You may be reading this letter in early May, but I am writing it on Earth Day, a month prior, and President Joe Biden's administration has just announced a climate plan that includes a goal to cut United States greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2030. The goal is more than double the prior commitment made by President Barack Obama's administration under the Paris Climate Agreement in 2015 and comes on the tail of several other major steps the Biden cohort has planned as part of the $2 trillion infrastructure proposal unveiled in March.

While there are certainly parts of this infrastructure plan that could have a significant, negative impact on the oil-and-gas market, it's also an opportunity for the propane industry to step forward as a feasible path to lowering emissions in the U.S. And there are several propane industry groups who aren't sitting around and waiting to take up that mantle.

Recently, the Western Propane Gas Association (WPGA) and its marketer members announced a goal to sell 100% renewable propane in all California markets by 2030. Find our coverage on the announcement and insight from WPGA President and Chief Executive Officer Joy Alafia on page 16.

Also in May, we cover the trends in technology that are driving optimization and innovation for propane industry professionals in our feature series, starting on page 28. Find several great leadership topics throughout the book this month, including Collett Services on long-term success in third-generation family ownership on page 34; 6 ways to improve sexual harassment training on page 38; and how to overcome the loneliness of leadership on page 40. And don't miss our midyear supply update (page 42) from industry analysts Rusty Braziel of RBN Energy, Steve Kossuth of Global LPG Supply at UGI Corp., and John Powell of Crestwood Equity Partners.

Last but not least, as you flip through this month's issue, you'll notice we have made some changes to the design. Our team is excited about the magazine's new look and we hope you are, too! All of the content you search for month after month remains, but we've added in a few new categories and special features. As always, we welcome your thoughts. 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

Thanks for reading,

ELIZABETH MANNING
Editor

BPN
BUTANE-PROPANE NEWS

STAFF

Elizabeth Manning Editor
emanning@cahabamedia.com
205-207-2827

Anjana Kallarackal Associate Editor
akallarackal@cahabamedia.com
205-961-3387

Steve Relyea Contributing Editor

Pat Thornton Contributing Editor

Landen Franklin Account Executive
lfranklin@cahabamedia.com
205-278-2875

Melanie Magee Art Director

Lori Masaoay Circulation Manager
customerservice@cahabamedia.com

PUBLISHER

Matthew G. Conroy President & Ceo
Matt Lyons Chairman
Greg Meineke Vp Of Sales
Terri Mcvey Creative Director
Brandon Whittemore Controller

NEWSLETTER

Elizabeth Manning Editor
Anjana Kallarackal Associate Editor
Steve Relyea Contributing Editor
Brenda Lieswald Circulation Manager

Newsletter editorial communications and subscriptions for the WEEKLY PROPANE NEWSLETTER should be directed to P.O. Box 530067, Birmingham, AL 35253.
Phone: 626-357-2168
Email: subscriptions@bpnews.com

AFFILIATION

NPGA
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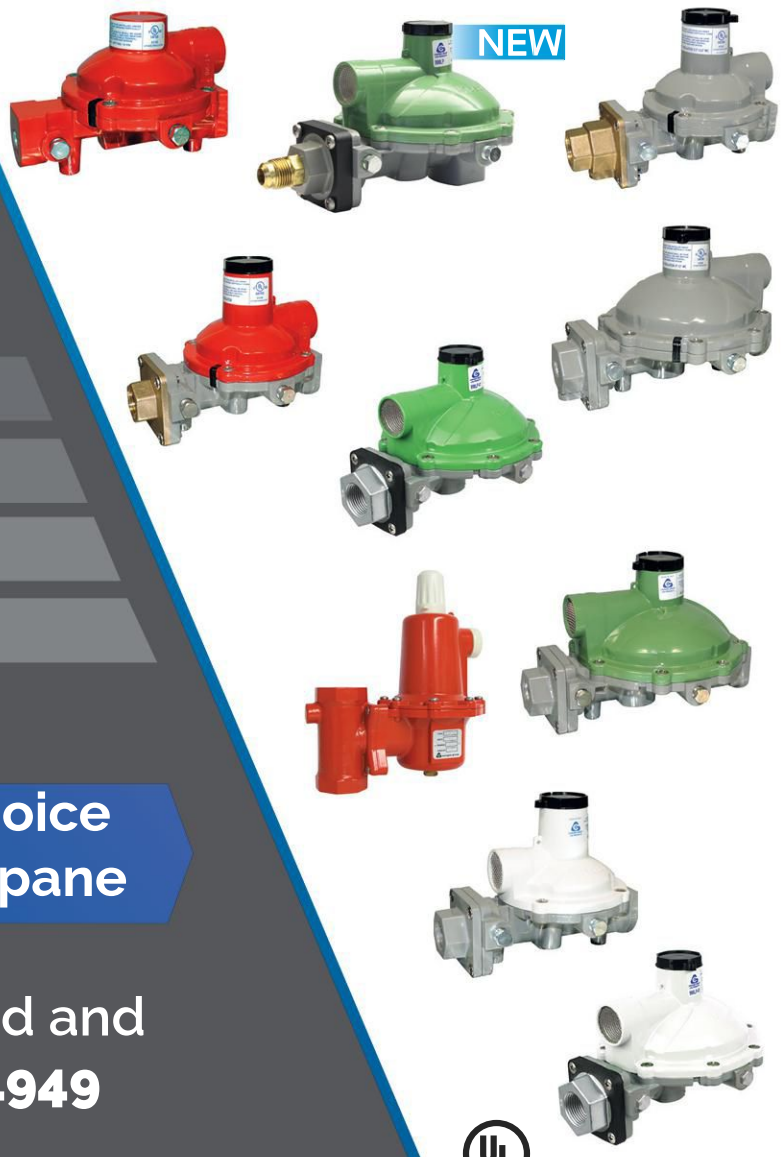
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May 2021



20



16



40

28 The Next Great Migration
How the past year has altered the use of technology in propane delivery and back-office communication

30 Sunrise Cooperative's Move to Remote Tank Monitoring
One distributor's experience in optimizing propane delivery with IIoT technology

32 Mastering Delivery Logistics
How a wireless, real-time dispatch decision enables better decisions and more efficient workflows

42 Midyear Supply Update
Amid a pull of propane exports to Asia, U.S. marketers consider 2021-22 decisions

6 Marketplace

8 News & Events

12 Verbatim
Propane leaders consider what they would do with a little extra time

14 Propane and the Law
Louisiana court affirms judgment for retailer in Superking Seafood v. Lacox Propane Gas

16 Beyond the Mains
Inside the WPGA's 2030 goal and why it's 'the industry's moonshot'

20 Marketing
A focus on customer service, loyalty programs and employees earns Palmer Gas & Oil 'Business of the Decade' award

24 Public Policy
Examining the evolving climate for pro-propane legislation & how industry advocates have adapted

34 Strategy
3 Generations, 4 new owners and the path to long-term success

38 Training
6 ways to make sexual harassment training more effective

40 Management
Why taking care of yourself will help you take better care of your employees

48 Advertiser's Index

56 Industry Insider



34



24



On the Cover
Dick Schaffer, fuel delivery driver at Sunrise Cooperative

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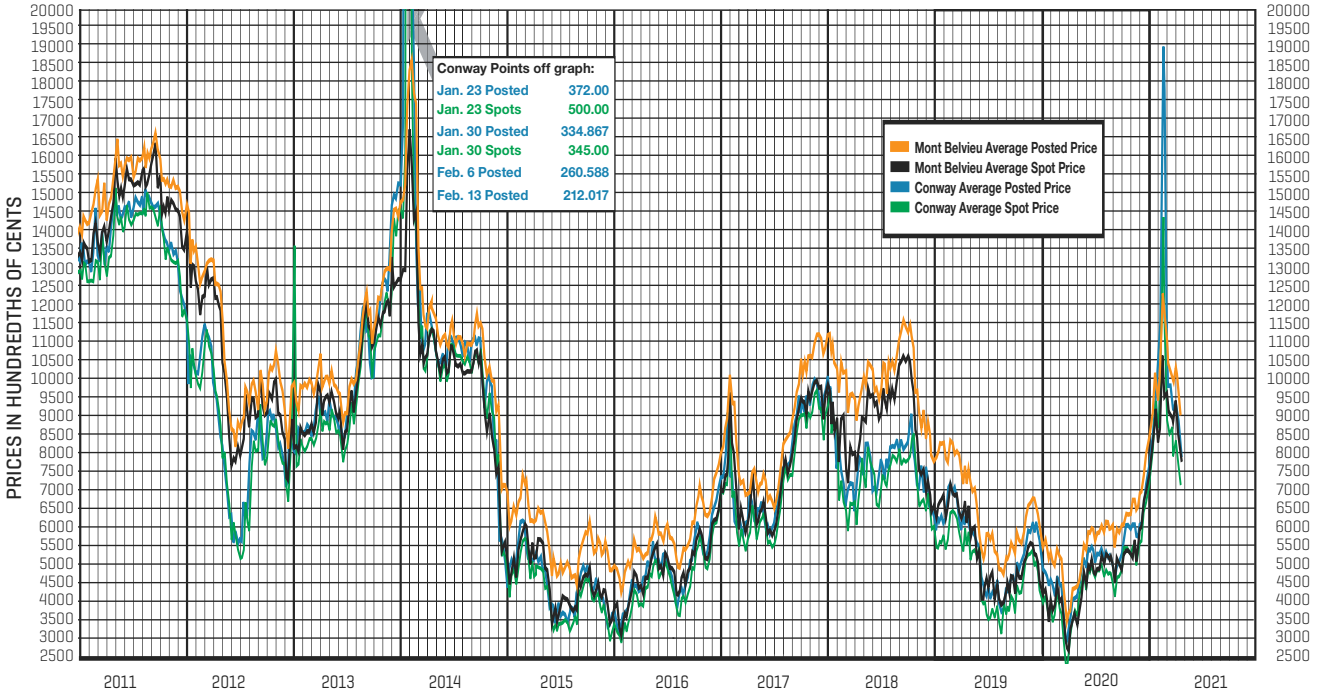
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MONT BELVIEU & CONWAY (GROUP 140) AVERAGE THURSDAY PROPANE PRICES

MID-WEEK AVERAGE POSTED/SPOT PROPANE PRICES

(Cents per Gallon)

Date	Mont Belvieu		Conway	
	POSTED	SPOT	POSTED	SPOT
3-18-21	101.339	88.500-89.500	96.247	82.000-84.250
3-25-21	99.506	87.375-88.000	91.597	79.500-81.000
4-1-21	103.172	94.500-96.000	92.797	83.000-84.750
4-8-21	101.672	85.000-87.500	88.597	77.000-78.000
4-15-21	90.006	77.625-78.250	79.147	71.625-72.250

CANADIAN INVENTORIES

Feb. 1, 2021

(Thousand Cubic Meters)

PROPANE

Region	3-21	4-21	Change	4-20
Propane-East	488.3	312.2	+56.4%	126.3
Propane-West	662.1	524.3	+26.3%	286.0
Total Propane	1150.4	836.5	+37.5%	412.4

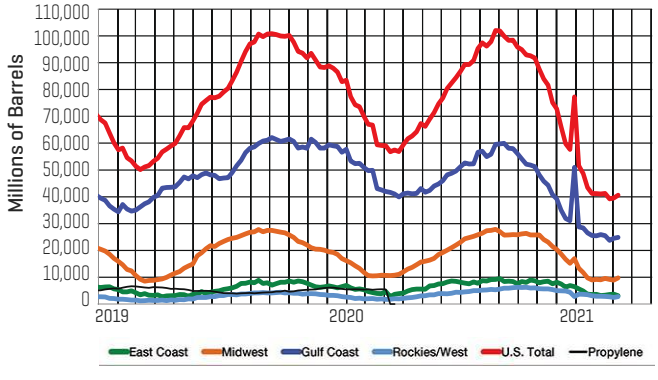
BUTANE

Butane-East	140.8	136.6	+3.1%	88.9
Butane-West	514.8	502.2	+2.5%	265.1
Total Butane	655.6	638.9	+2.6%	354.0

Source: Canada Energy Regulation

U.S. PROPANE INVENTORIES

March 12, 2021 to April 9, 2021



U.S. PROPANE INVENTORIES

March 12, 2021 to April 9, 2021 and One Year Ago

(Thousand Barrels)

	3-12-21	3-19-21	3-26-21	4-2-21	4-9-21	4-10-20
East Coast	3.174	3.31	3.542	3.693	3.103	2.768
Midwest	9.027	9.586	9.213	8.897	9.795	10.609
Gulf Coast	25.92	25.544	23.768	24.505	24.883	41.617
Rocky Mtn & West Coast	2.908	2.828	2.723	2.476	2.806	1.786
U.S. Total	41.029	41.269	39.247	39.572	40.588	56.78

Thinking About Selling Your Propane Business?

Hear from an industry executive who believes he made the *right choice* with EDP.



> “I joined Ebbetts Pass Gas Service as General Manager right after the company was bought by EDP in December of 2018. Most of the employees stayed and we’ve been able to retain a local family-friendly culture. Plus — thanks to the support of the entire EDP team — the integration went smoothly and we’ve enjoyed steady growth ever since.”
>
> **Don Vicari**
> General Manager, Ebbetts Pass Gas Service

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If you’re thinking about selling your propane business, contact David Stroupe, 312.254.5954 or dstroupe@edplp.net for a confidential conversation. Dave can work with you to achieve a positive outcome in transitioning your business.

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OTODATA TECHNOLOGIES USA ACQUIRES WISE TELEMETRY

Otodata Technologies USA announced it has acquired Wise Telemetry, a provider of remote monitoring devices and services for the industrial gas industry. Founded in 2008, Otodata designs, develops and manufactures remote level monitoring products and technologies for a variety of industries. Otodata's monitoring software allows users to monitor their tanks remotely, providing real-time data to drive asset and labor productivity in their business. "... This acquisition will accelerate our diversification into the industrial gas market, allowing us to leverage our innovative solutions for remote tank monitoring and serve this growing segment. This represents an important step in our strategy to address the growing demand for reliable, affordable and automated tank monitoring solutions across a variety of industries and geographic markets," said Andre Boulay, president and chief executive officer (CEO) of Otodata. "The Wise team is thrilled to be part of Otodata. Joining forces allows us to provide our customers with additional products, services and pricing structures, enabling them to monitor every asset and receive an instant return on their investment, both locally and abroad." said Eric Wise, founder and CEO of Wise Telemetry.

BLOSSMAN GAS AND ALLIANCE AUTOGAS LEADERSHIP LAUNCH ENERGY UNPLUGGED PODCAST

Energy Unplugged with Stuart Weidie is a new podcast series exploring modern energy solutions in the United States and abroad. Stuart Weidie, president of Alliance AutoGas and CEO of parent company Blossman Gas, will be joined by co-host Mark Denton, vice president of business development for Alliance AutoGas, and by rotating energy experts to speak on the current and future state of the energy industry and its technologies. Episodes will release on the first and third Tuesdays of the month. "I am excited to work with Stuart Weidie on our new podcast, where we will debunk some of the myths and misinformation about various energy sources and data," said Denton. "Our objective is to have guests who have expertise in different areas of energy in order to get to the facts about energy options for U.S. and international consumers." This first episode will feature Tucker Perkins, president of the Propane Education & Research Council. "We are looking forward to providing perspectives from a spectrum of energy experts to inform our listeners of the opportunities, innovations and realities of the energy complex," said Weidie. To listen, visit energyunpluggedpodcast.com.

SUBURBAN PROPANE PARTNERS WITH SANTA ROSA DOWNTOWN ACTION ORGANIZATION TO SUPPORT CALIFORNIA REFORESTATION

Suburban Propane Partners L.P. announced its role in the reforestation efforts in the North Bay region of Northern California, spearheaded by Santa Rosa's Downtown Action Organization, through a monetary donation. Santa Rosa's Downtown Action Organization will utilize this donation towards reforestation efforts, which have been ongoing since the devastating wildfires of 2019 and were delayed during the pandemic. Suburban Propane's donation will help fund the replacement of dead trees throughout a full block of Santa Rosa's downtown area, making a powerful impact on the community and on the local businesses that have struggled over the last few years. In 2020 alone, more than 4 million acres of trees in California were destroyed due to wildfires. In further support of its Go Green with Suburban Propane corporate pillar, Suburban Propane announces a contract extension for the purchase and supply of renewable propane in the state of California. Suburban will supply approximately 1 million gallons of renewable propane into the market through March 2022.

GLOBAL LPG REPORT NAMES KEY PLAYERS AND MARKET FORECAST THROUGH 2026

The "Global LPG Market - Forecasts from 2021 to 2026" report has been added to ResearchAndMarkets.com's offering. The global liquified petroleum gas (LPG) market is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 4.91% over the forecast period to reach a market size of $153.146 billion in 2026 from $109.493 billion in 2020. The pandemic has adversely impacted the global demand for LPG in the market, especially in commercial sector, and impacted the growth rate of it. On the other side, the residential demand for personal consumption purposes has increased. Overall, the increasing demand for the LPG has projected a positive growth in upcoming period. Due to lockdowns, the demand of LPG in Europe continues to affect adversely in the market. In other regions, several players are entering into the market with the aim to fulfill the demand for LPG. The U.S. and Russia are expanding in the LPG market to acquire the significant market share. Some under-construction projects of NGL are Arbuckle II, Front Range Expansion, Texas Express Expansion, Mariner East 2X and Lone Star Express Expansion that are projected to be operational by 2020. Some developed projects that will be operational by 2022. The marine industry has the significant growth for LPG market in the upcoming future as LPG is becoming popular as a marine fuel in shipping industry. All these upcoming projects, and boom in sale oil U.S. is going make the U.S. as the top supplier and producer of the crude oil in the market and the top supplier of the LPG as well. This increase in supply (along with the increase in demand) also helps to maintain the prices of LPG in the market and creates a potential demand and growth for the same in the future. Asia Pacific is predicted to have an attractive region for global LPG market, as due to increasing population in this region, the demand for the LPG is booming in there, especially in China, India and Japan. Also, the investments in industrialization and urbanization in these developing countries is increasing due to cost-effectiveness and is driving the growth of demand of LPG in forecast period in Asia Pacific region. Apart from it, government initiatives to promote the LPG for cooking instead of conventional

fuels to reduce the harmful gases into the environment. The full report can be found on researchandmarkets.com.

GRAY, GRAY & GRAY LAUNCHES ANNUAL PROPANE INDUSTRY SURVEY

Gray, Gray & Gray LLP has opened its annual Propane Industry Survey, available at gggllp.com. The survey has become an acknowledged source for industry statistics and benchmarking data. This year's survey will collect data from propane marketers across the country for the heating season spanning April 2020 through March 2021. The data collected through the survey will be augmented by financial and operational data developed by Angus Energy. Results will be published in September. "Our annual propane survey generates helpful insight into the state of the industry, and also provides useful business intelligence for individual propane dealers," said Marty Kirshner, CPA, MSA, who heads up Gray, Gray & Gray's Energy Practice Group. "... The supplemental information from Angus Energy will only serve to enhance the depth and accuracy of the data."

CETANE ASSOCIATES CELEBRATES 15-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

Cetane Associates LLC announces a 15-year milestone of providing financial advisory services to business owners in the retail energy distribution industry. Cetane's founder Steve Abbate recognized a need to provide business owners with experienced, specialized advice to help them realize maximum return on their business. In seeking the best results, Cetane looks to match the right buyers with their clients and takes in not only the financial aspects, but also important considerations, such as employees, customers and the legacy of the business. From its 2006 start, Cetane's founding principles remain the same today: to deliver financial services that create a winning result for business owners. "When I started the company, it was a leap of faith. I always tried to live by a lesson I was taught by one of my favorite authors, Zig Ziglar, who said that in order to get what you want out of life, you have to help other people get what they want. We have helped hundreds of owners achieve their transition goals. It's more than getting the most money for an owner, it's about getting the best transaction in every aspect, for both the buyer and the seller. That's what makes a truly successful transaction," Abbate said. Cetane Associate's contributions include membership, leadership, and sponsorship supporting many state, regional and national trade associations. In 2021, Cetane is collaborating to provide financial and promotional support to the nonprofit workforce effort Vets2Techs.

KANSAS CITY TENTH DISTRICT ENERGY ACTIVITY CONTINUED TO INCREASE IN Q1

The Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, Missouri, has released the first quarter Energy Survey. According to Chad Wilkerson, Oklahoma City branch executive and economist at the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, the survey revealed that Tenth District energy activity continued to increase moderately. Activity moved higher than year-ago levels for the first time since March 2019, and expectations also increased further. "District drilling and business activity continued to be quite solid in Q1, and expectations indicated further growth in the next six months," said Wilkerson. "In addition, many firms reported growth in employment for the first time since early 2019, and price expectations for crude oil were the highest they have been in over two years." The Kansas City Fed's survey provides information on current and expected activity among energy firms in the Tenth District. The survey monitors oil and gas-related firms located and/or headquartered in the Tenth District, with results based on total firm activity.

KIROS ENERGY MARKETING ANNOUNCES LONG-TERM DEAL WITH NEW YORK LPG FACILITY

Kiros Energy Marketing is pleased to announce a long-term throughput deal at the LPG storage and loading facility at the Global Companies Erie Boulevard Terminal, Albany, New York. As part of the agreement, starting April 2021, Kiros will have exclusive rights to all wholesale propane marketing through the facility and access to almost 1 million gallons of tank storage.

FLAME KING RECALLS PROPANE CYLINDERS DUE TO FIRE HAZARD

Flame King has announced a recall on its Hog 100-pound propane cylinders due to a risk of fire when using the product. The manufacturer, working in partnership with the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), released details with the recall notice on the CPSC website at cpsc.gov/recalls.

SUPERIOR PLUS RELEASES INAUGURAL SUSTAINABILITY REPORT

Superior Plus Corp. has published its inaugural Sustainability Report, which outlines its established environmental, social and governance practices. The report includes insight into Superior's 2020 operations and future milestones and is available at superiorplus.com. "Our Sustainability Report is a natural next step in our sustainability journey," said Luc Desjardins, president and CEO. "... This report and the work involved is just the beginning of our sustainability journey. Together, they set the stage for us to develop an enterprise-wide sustainability strategy that is grounded in meaningful targets, ongoing transparency and regular performance reporting."

KBR ENTERS LICENSE AGREEMENT FOR PROPANE DEHYDROGENATION PROJECT

KBR Inc. announced that it has signed a license agreement with JS Energy Limited for its proprietary K-PRO Propane Dehydrogenation (PDH) technology to convert propane into propylene for JS Energy's planned PDH project in Pakistan, which is expected to be commissioned in 2024. Launched in 2019, K-PRO is positioned to revolutionize the PDH industry through its innovative and compact design resulting in inherently lower capital cost.

Industry Calendar

May 6 PERC Webinar: Nuts & Bolts of the NPGA Apprenticeship Program
Virtual
propane.com

May 12-14 International School of Hydrocarbon Measurement
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
ishm.info

May 12 West/Pacific/Rocky Mountain Region Meeting
Virtual
propane.com

May 12 "It's a Gas: Propane" Studio Session Hosted by RBN Energy
Virtual
rbnenergy.com

May 18-19 PERC Advisory Committee Meeting
Virtual
propane.com

May 24-26 Eastern Energy Expo 2021: Education Summit & Marketplace
Virtual
easternenergyexpo.com

May 27-29 CETP Exterior Vapor Distribution (New Jersey Propane Gas Association)
Freehold, New Jersey
njpga.org

June 6-9 2021 Presidential Forum, NPGA Annual Meeting & Propane Days
Washington, D.C.
npga.org

June 16-18 Propane Gas Association of New England Summer Meeting 2021
Woodstock, Vermont
pgane.org

June 23-24 North Dakota Propane Gas Association Annual Meeting and Convention
Medora, North Dakota
ndpropane.org

June 23-26 Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Expo
Louisville, Kentucky
hpbexpo.com

For additional calendar items, visit bpnews.com.

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

WHAT DO YOU WISH YOU HAD MORE TIME TO DO?

Leaders share how more hours in the day could make a difference

BY NANCY COOP

As it sometimes happens, I pose questions for which I don't have a ready answer. And, as usual, once our colleagues begin to send in their answers to this month's question, I found myself relating to a few.

Since, we all have the same amount of time each day, how do we make time to do those things that really make a difference in our lives?

A pandemic has brought on questions, conditions, concerns, loss, opportunity and challenges for more than a year. Personally, I have squandered some of that time and made the best of some of it. The replies below encourage me to give this question further thought.

This column poses open-ended questions to a selection of our colleagues each month. Adopted from the familiar "Heard on the Street" format, there are their replies reported verbatim.

MORE TIME ON THEIR HANDS

Wishing for more time and wanting to do something more often are afterthoughts of chosen priorities. Every day, we are faced with the challenges of our choices. I can say I wish I had more time to travel. The truth is, I could, I just choose other things first. I'm blessed with a good staff that allows me considerable freedom, so I don't really wish I had more time for something. There are just times when I need to decide what is most important and make it happen.

JUDY TARANOVICH
PROCTOR GAS
PROCTOR, VERMONT

To learn new things ... I am a life-long student who enjoys acquiring a new skill. Having time available to put my somewhat inept efforts into practice is the icing on the cake.

LESLIE WOODWARD
FAIRVIEW FITTINGS
OAKVILLE, ONTARIO

I wish I had more time to help people in need. It has been difficult with COVID-19 to get out and help with charity events or other initiatives I'm passionate about. With most of my contact being by Zoom, I try to give a little extra of myself every day, listen intensely and ask deeper questions when I realize there is more to learn about a person. When I feel a person is struggling or there is more to the story, I dig in with discovery questions to create a courageous, honest conversation, which leads to improved, trusting relationships and a healthier mental outlook. I'm realizing you don't have to be in person to make the difference. You can come across just as genuine and caring over Zoom — building lasting relationships to come.

HAYLEY KARICOFE
AMERIGAS
CHURCHVILLE, VIRGINIA

When I think about time — or the lack thereof — I'm reminded of an interview with The Oracle of Omaha. Warren Buffet talked about his ability to buy basically anything he wants, except for time. Every moment that I am able to spend with the people I love is precious. My wife would probably say that I spend too much time working and not enough time relaxing, and she's probably right. I would definitely spend more time vacationing and traveling with my wife and children.

JASON SOULON
WESTMOR INDUSTRIES
SHAWNEE, KANSAS

Reading! It has been too long since I have gotten lost in a good story. I read quite a lot of children's books and some



parenting and business books, but I would love more time to read all of these in addition to something that is just for my own enjoyment.

LAUREN CLARK
BERGQUIST INC.
TOLEDO, OHIO

I wish I had more time to volunteer. I've always dreamed of building a school, nursing home, housing units, and an animal shelter — all in the same vicinity. Every resident, child and animal would thrive by interacting with each other.

LAURIE IRISH-JONES
IRISH PROPANE
BUFFALO, NEW YORK

In most cases, I think we commit ourselves to what we make time for. Not always of course; there can be competing demands for our time or urgent and unavoidable circumstances that can supersede all plans. All that aside, I would wish for more time to dedicate to our field teams working with them on development, operational and growth strategies. Of everything I do, being in one of our field locations working with and focusing on our people and business is most rewarding.

BOYD H. MCGATHEY
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There are so many answers I could give, but I have to say, my grandchildren are very important to me. I wish I had more time to attend their sporting events and school functions and just hang out with them. They all have such unique personalities, and it has been a joy to watch them grow into the neat young people they are becoming. I know how quickly time flies, so I want to make the most of those moments with them.

ROSIE BUSCHUR
MCMAHAN'S BOTTLE GAS
DAYTON, OHIO

I wish I could allocate more quality time to developing and maintaining important relationships with my family, friends, and business acquaintances. At this stage of my life and career, my health and family are my priorities. Those two areas are critical to me as I continue my work life, which I enjoy, and continue to promote propane safety risk management products and services to marketers.

JERRY SCHIMMEL
P3 PROPANE SAFETY
CUMBERLAND, RHODE ISLAND

THE CHOICES WE MAKE

Recently, I had lunch with my granddaughter, who joined university life last fall with more than a little trepidation at the prospect of taking all her classes virtually. I've come to learn that "Zoom fatigue" is a real issue for many of us now, and asked her how she was handling remote learning. She told me her theory on compartmentalizing her life in order to accomplish what she needs to each day. Lily has organized her life to include attending virtual classes, reading, writing, studying, staying in touch with friends and family and having fun. She is on the Dean's List, which speaks well of her method. Through my granddaughter and my colleagues, I gained some insight on the question that we contend with every day: What choices are we making with our precious time to create the lives that we want?

If you are interested in submitting responses, contact Coop at ncoop@cetane.net.



David 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.

THE DANGER IN IMPROPER REGULATOR PRESSURE SETTINGS

Louisiana court affirms judgment for retailer in Superking Seafood vs. Lacox Propane Gas

BY DAVID SCHLEE

In January, the Louisiana Court of Appeals affirmed the dismissal of a propane explosion lawsuit against a propane retailer. The suit arose from high delivery pressure that was caused by an improper pressure setting on a regulator.

BOILING CRAWFISH

In January 2011, Lacox Propane set a 250-gallon propane tank and commenced service at Superking Seafood in Hammond, Louisiana. Superking used propane to fuel multiple commercial appliances, including boilers for preparing crawfish. The installation was checked by the Lacox technician for potential hazards and approved by the Louisiana Liquefied Petroleum Gas Commission. The tank was equipped with a pressure regulator that reduced tank pressure to five pounds per square inch (psi), which was the approved level of pressure for the commercial appliances at Superking.

In March 2011, the Lacox service technician returned, at Superking's request, to switch the 250-gallon tank for a larger, 500-gallon tank. Once the new tank was in place, the technician checked the installation for leaks by increasing pressure to the system to 10 psi. He again checked the system for potential hazards. Finding no potential hazards, he reduced the system pressure to five psi and left.

FIRE IN THE BOILING ROOM

Over the next five years, Lacox made multiple propane deliveries to the 500-gallon tank. However, there were no additional service calls, and it does not appear that the tank ever ran out of gas. The last deliveries to Superking before the incident were made on April 3, 2016, and April 7, 2016.

On April 10, 2016, a fire occurred at Superking and spread to Lee's Drive-In, an adjacent restaurant. Both buildings were severely damaged. Investigation revealed that the fire originated in Superking's boiling room, where Superking was using multiple burners to boil crawfish. After the fire, the propane tank regulator showed a setting at 18 psi, 13 pounds over the allowable five psi limit. It was later alleged that the fire was the result of the delivery of high-pressure propane to the crawfish boilers, causing them to overheat and cause a combustible wall to ignite. It was also later alleged that the boilers were not intended for indoor use and were placed too close to the combustible wall.

Lacox denied ever changing the regulator setting from the 5 psi level that it was set at in 2011 and denied any knowledge that the setting had been changed. It also denied any knowledge of a hazardous condition or improper installation of the crawfish boilers.

A QUESTION OF DUTY

The owners of Superking and Lee's Drive-In (and their respective insurance carriers) sued Lacox Propane, which responded with a motion for summary judgment based on its lack of knowledge of the improper regulator setting. The trial court granted the Lacox motion, and the plaintiffs appealed. The appellate court began by reviewing the duties of a propane distributor under Louisiana law, focusing on the distributor's obligation to act if it has knowledge of a hazard in the customer's gas system:

"The Liquefied Petroleum Gas Commission makes and enforces rules and regulations governing the installation of liquefied petroleum gas tanks or systems and the installation and use of liquefied pewtroleum gas appliances. The Commission rules provide that a dealer shall not serve any liquefied petroleum gas system that the dealer knows is improperly installed or in a dangerous condition. All improper systems shall be corrected before the dealer services such system with fuel for the first time. However, a servicing dealer shall not be responsible for unauthorized changes in or failures of an existing system or connected appliances that have been tested, checked, and found in compliance with Commission's rules and regulations. In an action for damages against a liquefied petroleum gas supplier,



it shall be an affirmative defense that the damage was caused by the alteration, modification, or repair of liquefied petroleum gas equipment/appliances, if the alteration, modification, or repair was done without the supplier's knowledge."

THE TESTIMONY

The court then reviewed the evidence against this standard. It started with the service technician who installed both propane tanks. He stated that in January 2011 he set the regulator to deliver 5 psi and that after installing the larger tank in March 2011 and checking for leaks, he again set the regulator to deliver 5 psi. He never returned to Superking nor had any knowledge that the regulator was ever set at a higher level. The regular delivery driver for the Superking account said that his duties included checking the percentage gauge on the tank to determine how much propane to add. He added that his duties did not include checking the pressure delivered by the regulator located near the percentage gauge. He added that he did not know the appropriate pressure setting for a propane tank regulator. He also testified that he did not enter the Superking boiling room when refilling the propane tanks. Superking, he testified, never alerted him to any problem with its propane system, and he did not see any unsafe practices or situations while there.

POSSIBLE MISTAKE

Lacox supervisors testified that a propane tank regulator, such as that at Superking, be set no higher than five psi. They denied knowing how the subject regulator got to 18 psi and stated that a Lacox employee would not have set the regulator at 18 psi.

They confirmed that Lacox route salesmen were not required to check regulator pressure. They confirmed that Lacox did not recheck the regulator pressure after the initial installations in 2011, and Lacox had no record of Superking requesting a pressure check at any time after that. They stated that, upon initial installation of the propane tanks, the technician would have checked Superking's setup to make sure everything was in "good working order, the right valves and hoses, and in a safe place," but Lacox wouldn't have again checked Superking's setup unless notified of a change. However, when asked if the technician could have forgotten to lower the pressure back to five psi after checking for leaks in March 2011, one of the supervisors stated that it was "a possibility that anybody could make a mistake."

The court stated that the service technician's testimony that he set the regulator at 5 psi was unrebutted by the plaintiffs. Just because a supervisor admitted that "anybody could make a mistake," the court reasoned, "does not reasonably infer that the technician set the pressure at 18 psi, not at 10 psi, and then forgot to lower the pressure from 18 psi to 5 psi." It concluded that it is mere speculation to argue that the technician improperly set the regulator in 2011.

CONSTRUCTIVE KNOWLEDGE

The court also rejected plaintiffs' argument that Lacox had "constructive knowledge" of the improper use of outdoor burners inside the Superking boiling room, or the fact that the burners were too close to a combustible wall. The service technician, it stated, "testified that he did check Superking's entire set up in 2011 and, on the two occasions he was there, he remembered nothing that he would have considered a potential safety hazard."

The court found no evidence to rebut this testimony. Further, the Lacox delivery driver testified that he did not enter the boiling room when he refilled the propane tank at Superking. The court found that "the fact that he frequently refilled the exterior tanks over several years is not evidence that he knew Superking's boiling room setup was unsafe."

The plaintiffs argued that the delivery driver had a duty to discover that the pressure regulator was not pwroperly set, given that it was so close to the percentage fill guage. The court rejected this claim for two reasons.

First, the plaintiffs "have pointed to no source imposing such a duty." Second, "there is no evidence of when the regulator's pressure was changed to 18 psi," so the setting could have been changed by some unknown person after the last delivery.

Finally, the court rejected the last argument raised by the plaintiffs — that Lacox had a duty to somehow lock the regulator so that its setting could not be changed. Having rejected all of the plaintiffs' arguments, the appellate court affirmed the dismissal of all claims against Lacox Propane.



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



CALIFORNIA MARKETERS SET GOAL OF 100% RENEWABLE PROPANE

Inside the WPGA's 2030 commitment and why it's the industry's 'moonshot'

BY STEVE RELYEA

The Western Propane Gas Association (WPGA) and its propane marketer members have set an ambitious goal to sell 100% renewable propane in all markets in California by 2030. They have also outlined a plan for achieving that goal. The goal, the plan and the benefits of renewable propane are outlined in a sustainability statement recently posted on the association's website.

"WPGA is ready to model the way for the evolution of propane in our state, adding the important element of sustainability to our story of resiliency and affordability," said Joy Alafia, president and chief executive officer. "With this sustainability statement, we validate our continued commitment to a clean energy future."

As the association representing the propane industry in California, WPGA and its members have seen a need to expand the availability and use of renewable propane. They have done so in response to the state's demand for decarbonization and a misperception of propane as just another fossil fuel.

Kamps Propane, headquartered in Manteca, California, was one of the marketers that participated in the early conversations within WPGA about renewable propane. "We saw the way the regulatory and policy environment in California was really compromising the way our industry worked in the past," said Josh Simpson, vice president of marketing at Kamps Propane. "Now, in 2021, suppliers are bringing renewable propane into the market, and it's time to get the word out."

THE PLAN

To achieve the goal of 100% renewable propane in California by 2030, the association and its members are focusing their efforts on three areas of action:

1. Engagement

First, they are engaging with fuel producers, legislators and policymakers to support a viable path toward the increased production of renewable propane. To that end, they have produced fact sheets and hosted webinars that cover what renewable propane is and how it is produced.

By engaging with legislators, the association recently drove the introduction of a bill in the state legislature that would provide financial incentives to producers for the production of renewable propane. The bill, AB-1559, was introduced Feb. 19 by assembly member Patrick O'Donnell. "It seeks to provide clean energy equity," Alafia said.

She explains that a bill that became law in California in 2016 began providing incentives to transition the gas used to generate electricity from natural gas to renewable natural gas. There is no companion effort for propane.

"We are advocating for making the investment in a solution that will provide clean energy to propane customers who have been marginalized in the energy policy discussion," Alafia said.

By engaging with regulators, WPGA helped get propane included in the state's Low Carbon Fuel Standards program, a carbon market system. There is still a premium to pay for renewable propane compared to conventional propane, so the association works to get fuel incentives similar to those that exist for other solutions.

"We knew credits would be generated with renewable propane," Alafia said. "These credits have enabled the consumption of renewable propane for the transportation sector; there is a market for it."



U-Haul announced in October 2020 the purchase of its first million gallons of renewable propane, which is available to customers at U-Haul autogas facilities across Southern California. U-Haul, the largest U.S. retailer of propane since 1987, serves thousands of propane customers daily at more than 1,150 locations where the fuel is offered.
Photo courtesy of U-Haul

By engaging with producers, the association has shown that renewable propane has value. They have educated producers who weren't aware that renewable propane can help customers meet clean air goals. "We have reached out to those who produce renewable propane or are capable of producing it, letting them know there is demand for the clean fuel," Alafia said. "For producers for whom propane is not the primary goal, we let them know propane, a secondary product, has value."

2. Education

Secondly, the WPGA is educating consumers on the environmental benefits of using renewable propane versus conventional fuels. The association estimates that transforming the propane building sector to renewable propane would reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 2.258 tonnes.

Here, too, the message is that renewable propane can contribute to clean energy diversity and that the propane industry is a partner for clean energy, now and in the future. "The average person hasn't heard of renewable propane," Alafia said. "We want to let them know about it and educate them about why we must invest in a portfolio of low carbon energy solutions."

3. Innovation

In its third area of action, the association is working to drive innovative equipment and appliance technologies that dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions. To accomplish this goal, it has connected research hubs with original equipment manufacturers and connected consumers and other key stakeholders with the Propane Education & Research Council (PERC). "We recently connected an equipment manufacturer [to PERC] to learn how to apply for funding for development," Alafia said. "We help connect the dots for all stakeholders, as there are real opportunities for innovation in our industry."

"Renewable propane can deliver a more immediate path for carbon reductions because the customer doesn't have to invest in infrastructure," Alafia



Photo courtesy of Renewable Energy Group

REG Geismar is a renewable diesel production facility in southern Louisiana. The plant uses a variety of feedstocks to produce approximately 75 million gallons of high-quality renewable diesel, renewable naphtha and renewable propane annually.

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THE INDUSTRY'S MOONSHOT

WPGA and its members began working toward the adoption of renewable propane in 2015. At that time, they formulated a strategic plan for aiding the commercialization of renewable propane and explaining to propane customers that the industry contributes to decarbonization efforts.

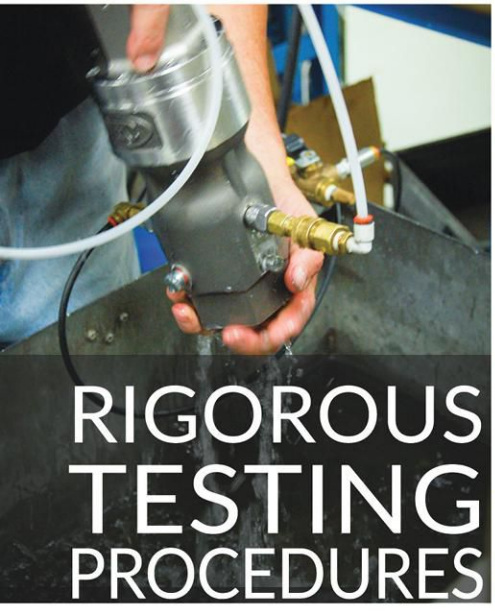
Today, there is a facility in Louisiana producing renewable propane and there is a customer (U-Haul) that has committed to purchasing its first 1 million gallons of renewable propane. "Renewable propane is not a science project; it's a commercially viable product," Alafia said.

Simpson reports that he hears from propane marketers in other parts of the country that they are sympathetic with policy and regulatory challenges facing California businesses. They are also hopeful that the state's marketers can show them a way to navigate through these challenges and capitalize on propane's position as an alternative fuel. "For every marketer, there's a point in the future when this may be an essential part of their own business too," he adds. "They are watching what happens so they will be ready to execute and fulfill the potential when it arrives in their market. Those who prepare will reap significant benefits."

Looking ahead, Alafia points to the great strides made thus far. She notes that now is the time to be bullish on the role for renewable propane in our energy transformation, particularly as President Joe Biden's administration identifies investments in the green economy. With its new sustainability statement, WPGA aims to have a seat at the clean energy table for generations. "This is our moonshot," Alafia said. "If you limit yourself as far as what's possible, you will not accomplish much."

Read the complete sustainability statement on the association's website at westernpga.org/sustainability.

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COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AS A KEY MARKETING STRATEGY

A focus on customer service, loyalty programs and employees earns Palmer Gas & Oil 'Business of the Decade' award

BY PAT THORNTON



Images courtesy of Palmer Gas & Oil

It's become common in recent years for Bill Ermer, president of Palmer Gas & Oil (PGO) to start a newsletter thanking the company's customers for their continued support and noting that the company has been recognized for another award. Most recently, Ermer announced the company had been voted "Business of the Decade" by Business NH Magazine in the retail/wholesale category.

Fifty judges played a role in this honor for PGO — the company had previously been the magazine's "Business of the Year" and garnered many awards during the decade.

"It's hard to believe that a business that started as a one-man operation four generations ago has grown into the company that it is today," Ermer said in his fall 2020 newsletter.

"My grandfather, William E. Palmer, started PGO in 1949 as a one-truck operation out of his general store in North Salem, New Hampshire. In 1969, my wife Lorraine and I took over the business, and we also ran the general store for a few years until the gas business grew and became our primary interest. In 1981, I took over Ermer Oil, which was started by my father in 1932," he continued.

"We've been around for 89 years and are still going strong, now serving New Hampshire, Maine and Massachusetts," Ermer said. "Both of my children, Charlie and Joanne, help run the business, and we even had my granddaughters Nicole and Laura in here this summer helping out. In addition to the generations of my own family, we have also serviced generations of customers for many years, and we have multigenerational families among our employees, some of whom have been with the company for 30 years or more."

PRIORITIZING COMMUNITY SERVICE

"With a belief that fuel delivery and service should be more than 'fill and bill,' we work hard to put a smile on our customers' faces every time with great customer service, generous loyalty programs and happy customers," said Peter Iacobucci, general manager. "Community is at the heart of PGO. Because our employees live in the same communities where we do business, we pride ourselves on our community involvement and support both statewide and local nonprofits."

Iacobucci said that in any given year, PGO typically participates in a major community-focused event every few months, whether it is an on-site bloodmobile for employees and customers, a donation box for the New Hampshire Food Bank, a winter coat drive or a walk for mental health.

"We donate to raffles, school events and civic organizations. Our annual customer appreciation day draws close to a thousand people who enjoy a day of food, fun and thanks from PGO employees, many of whom are friends and neighbors," he said.

While community service has been a centerpiece at PGO for many years, recent data shows that more and more people in the United States, especially younger employees, believe it is good for companies to ask employees to do volunteer work and reward them for it.

A few years ago, UnitedHealthcare found that volunteering helped 71% of surveyed employees feel better about

their company. These employees reported feeling great job satisfaction and showed greater levels of engagement at work after volunteering as part of a company effort.

"A company's ethics, employee satisfaction and community involvement are beginning to become important factors in which brand a consumer chooses," according to the Reputation Institute, which has reported that consumers give more weight to a company's reputation than their products at a rate of 60% to 40% respectively.

A PricewaterhouseCoopers study found that 86% of Generation Y employees said they would leave a company if the organization's corporate social responsibility programs started to slip in quality.

With such programs impacting employee recruitment and retention, these programs may only become more important to company leadership as Generation Y employees move up the ladder in their companies.

AN APPRECIATION FOR QUALITY SERVICE

Ermer, Iacobucci and the PGO team believe the awards PGO has received have also come about due to quality customer service, a generous Refer-A-Friend program and a program allowing customers to redeem points for PGO products and services, for gift certificates to local businesses and as donations to charitable nonprofits in the community.

"Why should you choose our energy company over another company that offers the same products and services we do?" is a question posed on the PGO website. The response reads: "Because we do it better!" The response continues, "Along with our 24/7 emergency delivery and service, our award-winning customer service is unsurpassed, and we make it our mission to provide you with service that's so friendly, simple and safe — you can focus on what matters in your life and leave your energy needs to us."

A full-service heating, ventilation and air conditioning team is another factor











that differentiates PGO from other oil and propane delivery companies.

"We also offer in-house excavation, a tank monitor program and installation financing," Iacobucci said. "The newest PGO offering is electrician services, which allows us now to proudly say that PGO is truly a 'one-stop shop' for [all of our] customers' energy needs."

CULTIVATING A FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOOD FEELING

Ermer and Iocabucci noted that a neighborhood feeling draws not only customers, but employees as well. "In a culture where job-hopping is the norm, more than 50% of our employees have a tenure of almost 10 years. Husbands, wives, mothers, sons … ours is a workforce of multigenerational families, including the owners, who recently welcomed the fourth generation to the company," Iacobucci said.

According to Ermer, even though employees work for him, he also places importance on working for his employees. He encouraged readers to search the "Fish Philosophy."

"We put safety first in everything we do, including devoting a full day to companywide safety training, and we invest significantly in technology and equipment," Ermer said.

"Our motto of 'Friendly. Simple. Safe' permeates all that we do — all day and every day," Iacobucci said. "Not only is it the foundation of our mission statement, but it is the foundation of our company. Keeping the work atmosphere pleasant and employees happy easily translates into delighted customers. PGO keeps it simple with an infrastructure to support day-to-day processes that make it easy and safe for both its employees and customers. Safety is a top priority for all PGO employees."

"PGO is a drug-free workplace, and all employees must pass the National Propane Gas Association's Certified Employee Training Program when onboarding. PGO has a full-time safety director and has won the Excellence in Risk Management Award for being a leader in the implementation of energy safety and risk management programs three times," Iacobucci continued.

"Not only do we invest in our current employees, but we prepare for our future employees, as well," Ermer said. "PGO recently partnered with a local nonprofit known as 'Bring Back the Trades,' whose mission is to spread awareness about the shortage in all trades and engage students about the benefits of joining a trade. Our own company has benefited greatly from trade school graduates as a result of the organization."

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.

COMPANY VALUES AT WORK

The PGO website lists the following company values as its culture drivers, both internally and externally:

- **Safety** — "We put safety before profit or convenience — always. We meet all industry standards for safety, and our entire team works to ensure the safety of our employees and our customers."
- **Excellence** — "We are constantly looking for ways to improve the way we do business and make our customers' lives simpler."
- **Integrity** — "We take pride in treating our customers and each other with respect in all our interactions. Our business encompasses higher standards of honesty, ethics and integrity."
- **Teamwork** — "Makes the dream work. That's why we look beyond our own desks to find creative solutions to meet our customers' needs."
- **Community** — "We don't just deliver fuel and provide HVAC services – we live here too. We help keep our community strong through consistent active involvement."
- **Fun** — "Anyone can buy trucks and deliver fuel, but our positive attitude sets us apart. We show up every day ready to connect, be playful and put a smile on someone's face."

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COVID-19 CHANGES THE GAME FOR PROPANE INDUSTRY LOBBYISTS

Examining the evolving climate for pro-propane legislation and how industry advocates have adapted

BY PAT THORNTON



Photo Credit: The office of U.S. Rep. John Joyce, M.D.

U.S. Representative John Joyce of Pennsylvania and Jeff Shaffer of Shaffer's Bottled Gas

As the 2020 legislative session closed, the National Propane Gas Association (NPGA) announced several goals for the propane industry were achieved with the passage of the $1.4 trillion legislative package. Michael Baker, NPGA's senior director of legislative affairs, said, "Congress wrapped several beneficial provisions for the propane industry into the large package." The year-end legislative package contained research and development funding opportunities through the Department of Energy, including $5 million for vehicle engine technology and the use of dimethyl ether (DME) as well as extensions of the Alternative Fuel Tax Credit and the Alternative Fuel Refueling Infrastructure Credit through the end of 2021.

At the time, Baker said COVID-19 had mandated a shift in lobbying techniques and strategies in 2020. "We're not lobbying in person anymore, but there have been other effective ways to communicate our wishes to Congress," Baker said. "The NPGA's focus has been on transitioning to virtual meetings with legislators and their staff and continuing to work closely with propane industry coalitions. Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, NPGA was still able to accomplish its goals."

"During the last several weeks of the year, NPGA helped lead a small industry coalition to meet with tax-writing committee legislators and sent a letter to Congress with signatures from over 400 organizations, a majority of which are propane associations and companies," he continued. "These efforts helped secure extensions for the alternative fuel credits. These tax provisions provide certainty to the propane industry and its customers and help transition more Americans to autogas vehicles."

SUCCESS STORIES IN THE LEGISLATURES DURING COVID-19

"Our 2020 legislative session was wrapping up just as COVID-19 was starting to become a major issue in March last year," said Dawna Leitzke, executive director of the South Dakota Petroleum & Propane Marketers Association. "Our state never closed down. During the 2021 session, only two lobbyists got COVID-19, and both cases were not serious."

She noted that more legislators, many of whom did not wear masks, got COVID-19. "In the Senate, masks were required on the Senate floor but in the House of Representatives, masks were only recommended. We originally thought we could watch a lot of the session virtually to avoid unnecessary contact with others." As it turned out, Leitzke and her team felt it was important to be engaged with lawmakers at the Capitol. "We needed to be there. I felt it would be OK if I wore my mask diligently and practiced social distancing." Leitzke met regularly on the floor with a House member helping with her legislation. Both wore masks regularly, and despite almost every legislator with desks around the House member getting sick with COVID-19, she and the House member stayed well.

In North Dakota, the Petroleum & Propane Association's Executive Director Mike Rud said the legislature was very fortunate to only have a few COVID-19 cases. "Senate Bill 2065 was our hallmark piece of legislation this year," he said. "The bill approved grants to experiment to see if three salt caverns in Western

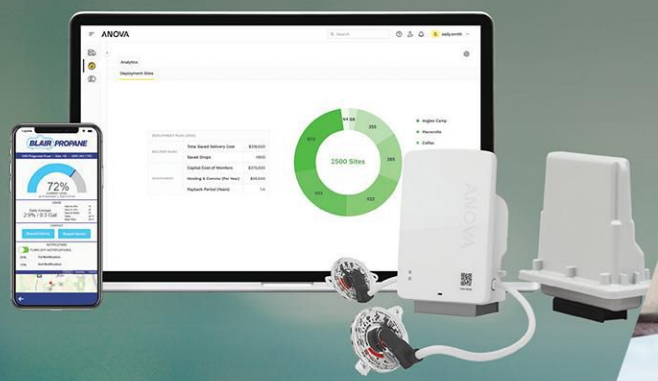
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North Dakota can safely store natural gas and propane. Initial studies look very positive. If we are able to use these salt caverns long term, storage of 2.2 MMbblds of propane and cost-effective delivery within North Dakota and surrounding states could really alleviate some supply constraints here. This could really end the need for a lot of long hauls for our members."

"North Carolina's governor may be signing House Bill 220 into law soon, which is 'Assuring Choice of Service' legislation," said the state association's President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) John Jessup. "So far, it has passed the House and is in the Senate committees. This is good progress, as last year was a complete washout as far as visiting legislators and holding our annual Legislative Day at the Raleigh Legislative Building."

Florida Propane Gas Association's Executive Vice President Dale Calhoun said Florida's Legislature has been more open to making sure that everyone has access to energy, and this has helped shepherd along their energy choice legislation.

"We were successful in New Mexico in quashing a bill that would have enabled cap and trade on fossil fuels and to modify another bill to include industry participation on a board that will be looking to establish sustainable energy," said Colorado and New Mexico's Executive Director Dan Binning. "We have been successful in Colorado in keeping propane from being named in legislation that requires natural gas utilities to 'offset' greenhouse gas emissions from production, transportation and use. The Colorado session still has two months to run [as of April 7, 2021] so we need to stay vigilant."

Binning also said that despite losing in their effort to introduce a "Ban the Ban" bill in Colorado, the effort allowed his team to gain insight on how various committee members think.

Pennsylvania Propane Gas Association Executive Director Shelby Bell said that in February 2021, the association's board directed the Governmental Affairs Committee executive director and their lobbyist to pursue the possibility of introducing "Ban the Ban" legislation.

"The very next day, a senator introduced a bill on this topic. Our lobbyist was able to have the senator's chief of staff 'attend' our virtual membership meeting to discuss the bill, and other legislation before the Senate Environmental Resource & Energy Committee that he serves on as executive director," Bell said.

Kentucky Propane Gas Association's (KPGA) Director of Communications and Public Affairs Steve McClain said, "Kentucky joins the relatively few states that have passed a 'Ban the Ban' bill. The government affairs team was able to secure a change in the Senate to include propane as a protected energy source, and the bill became law without the governor's signature." He noted that in seeking the change, the KPGA was careful to ensure that propane was not incorporated anywhere under the jurisdiction of the Public Service Commission. "This measure would also prohibit local governments from banning the use of any energy sources, including propane, except for zoning and planning purposes. KPGA also joined with other groups in getting a COVID-19 liability protection bill passed, but we are currently waiting to see if the governor will veto or sign the bill," McClain said.

"We have been able to form alliances with others with similar goals during the session," said Dave Wager, executive director of the Minnesota Propane Gas Association. "It is actually easier and more efficient to meet with multiple people and facilitate working together on key issues. We have been able to coordinate and use our combined resources more effectively. Also, during online testimonials and meetings, it sometimes helps to facilitate listening. People have become accustomed to using mute and not interrupting as much."

"There is an advantage to zoom," said Leslie Anderson, president and CEO of the Propane Gas Association of New England. "As a regional association, zoom meetings have given me more of an opportunity to testify than I normally have. ... It is easier to monitor multiple zoom hearings at the same time and predict when your time will be for testifying. As a result, I have found myself testifying on more bills this session than I normally would. ... In this way, it has been an educational opportunity to educate our policy makers and we have had multiple successes tabling bills related to energy sitting, railcar storage, zero emission vehicles and energy battery storage."

Anderson said the increased opportunities to testify have given her a chance to determine which pro-propane arguments are influencing policymakers. "The top two arguments that I have found to resonate the most in New England this year are about propane's role in energy security and diversity, especially following the events in Texas and the importance of propane's role in environmental justice and equity."

"Educating legislators about the role propane plays globally to reduce emissions, improve gender equality, and provide affordable energy to local environmental justice zones has been a powerful story," she said. "In particular, the argument that we should not create environmental injustices through the mining of rare earth metals in areas of the globe where the most vulnerable of all disadvantaged communities exist, just to reduce emissions in one U.S. state, has resonated and helped to table numerous bills this session. Propane's role as an alternative solution to battery storage is one that we should be screaming from the mountaintops."

Read the extended version of this article, including commentary on the lobbying challenges faced by associations over the past year, on our website at bpnews.com/may-publicpolicy.

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.



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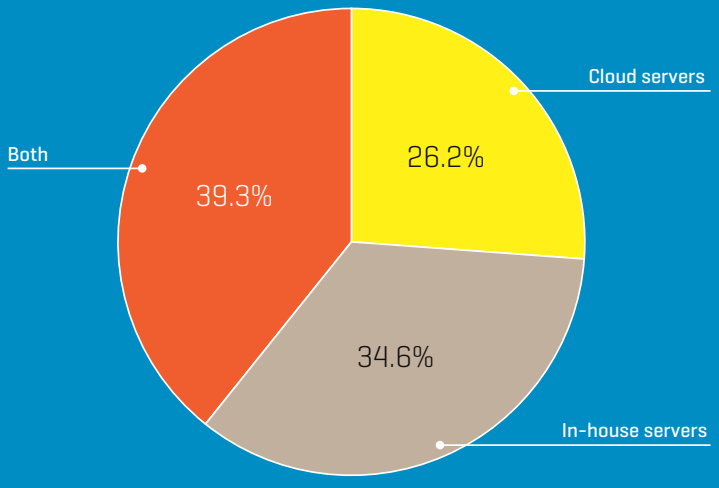
THE GREAT DIGITAL MIGRATION

How the past year has altered the use of tech in propane delivery and back-office communication

BY ELIZABETH MANNING

In early 2021, Cargas Energy released its Top Technology Trends in Fuel Delivery Benchmarking Report, which identified seven technology trends in the energy industry: tech for sales and marketing, tech to improve the customer experience, tank monitors, mobile technology, the cloud, business intelligence and cybersecurity. "It's interesting to note that these tools are not new technology or new to the industry. Many of them have been around for more than 15 years. However, we're seeing adoption rates increase as the tech improves and prices drop, making it easier for fuel dealers to incorporate these tools into their businesses," said Aaron Cargas, vice president overseeing marketing and product development for Cargas Energy. Below, hear from Cargas on what trends are here to stay, how business has changed in the past year, and more.

Is your company data stored on in-house or cloud servers?



What safety measures have you implemented due to the pandemic?

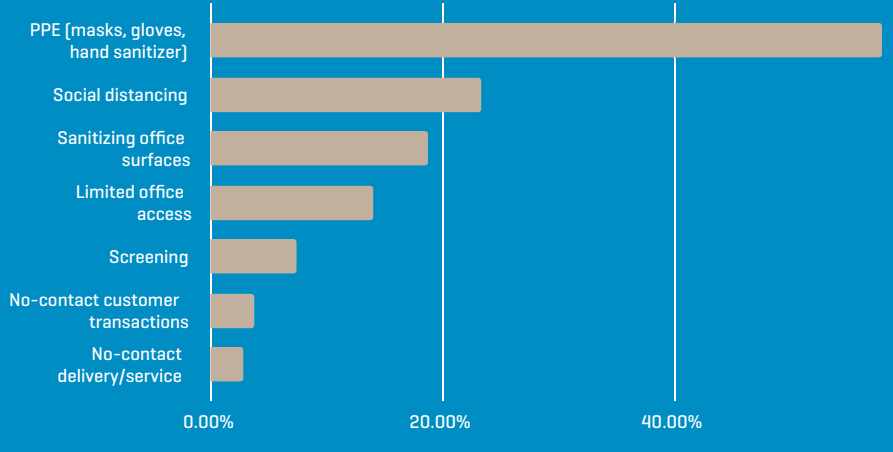


Photo Credit: Cargas 2021 Top Technology Trends in Fuel Delivery Benchmarking Report

BPN: The report mentioned a trend toward investing in larger tools — can you explain this?

AC: There are tools that require a significant investment or change for the business. For example, this could mean new fuel delivery software, a sales tool like customer relationship management (CRM) software, upgrading from a small business accounting solution to something designed for larger organizations, migrating systems to the cloud, or replacing existing solutions with cloud products. It might also mean installing tank monitors for a large portion of residential customers, installing a customer portal, building a customer-facing mobile app, or revamping a website to support online ordering. Any change to an essential business system is a big deal. Installing a new system means retraining the workforce and changing well-established business processes. It's easy for companies to focus on adding smaller tools first. However, with a year of working through the pandemic under their belts, fuel dealers are less hesitant to invest in larger systems like new back-office software, a customer portal, CRM software, or marketing automation.

BPN: How has a year operating in a pandemic changed customer needs, and what tech has helped propane companies to adapt?

AC: If anything, 2020 has taught us flexibility. Consumers bounced back and forth between working in the office and working from home, depending on the safety guidelines of their particular state or business. Some moved out of state or took up temporary residence with family or at a vacation home. Childcare and schooling were in flux. Schedules and routines were interrupted. So, customers' needs were and are constantly changing.

When it comes to fuel delivery, customers need a provider that is flexible enough to accommodate their changing needs. And they need control and insight into when they receive service. The best tech fuel dealers have to support consumers are customer-facing tools and good lines of communication. Giving customers the ability to view their account information, pay bills, enroll in budget plans and request deliveries through a portal or a website is essential. Text or email notifications give customers insight into their deliveries and help them make changes immediately. Fuel dealers can also use these tools to communicate important information, like changes to their hours of operation or safety protocols. To support all of this, a fuel dealer's operating system needs to give them the flexibility to respond to customers' changing needs.

BPN: What tech changes implemented over the past year do you expect to stay long term?

AC: Before the pandemic, we saw a shift to the cloud in business. However, the pandemic emphasized more than ever the need for a cloud-first infrastructure. The cloud allows businesses to manage their operations from anywhere in the world, and it can support remote or distributed workforces. While fuel dealers will always require drivers in the field, roles like customer service, collections and even dispatching could be handled remotely with the right technology. The cloud offers other benefits like advanced security, disaster recovery, zero maintenance and low costs. While we don't expect fuel dealers to continue to operate with remote teams, we think the pandemic has highlighted the value of the cloud, and we expect businesses to continue to migrate their systems.

Similarly, we expect to see communication tools like softphones, webcams, video conferencing and chat stick around. These tools became essential when employees were working from home, but they remain helpful in keeping teams connected. Instead of having the usual monthly conference call with division managers, we expect companies to continue using video in meetings. While everyone is looking forward to the return of large-scale events, virtual events were successful in 2020, and we expect organizations to start offering a hybrid experience where attendees can choose whether they would like to join virtually or in person. We expect any tools implemented for customers during the pandemic to stay. And we believe fuel dealers will explore additional options to serve customers in a mobile-friendly way moving forward.

BPN: What are the biggest challenges for customer-facing tech used for fuel delivery?

AC: Most fuel dealers understand the shift in customer expectations and are implementing new tools accordingly. One big challenge is that while fuel dealers are giving customers new ways to interact with them, their communication methods remain essentially unchanged. The challenge for fuel dealers is not only to offer tools to customers, but to use those same tools themselves. This also impacts sales and marketing. Fuel dealers are becoming more focused on their online presence. However, they still rely heavily on traditional sales and marketing techniques like print advertising and direct mail to win business. More digital options for sales and marketing, supported by the right technology, could help fuel dealers to acquire new customers and retain existing ones.

BPN: What is your advice for businesses looking to work more efficiently with a remote or partially remote workforce?

AC: One of the best things businesses can do is develop a technology strategy as part of their business plan. This means looking beyond individual tools and the benefits they can bring to a specific team or department and seeing how all of their business systems work together and where improvements can be made. Another critical component to working successfully with technology is being open to change. Using the technology as it was designed to support your business means you'll get the most out of it. Businesses that want to continue with a remote or partially remote workforce will need to adopt a cloud-first strategy if they haven't already, and also make sure they have the tools in place to allow remote employees and employees in the office to work together seamlessly.

BPN: What's the next frontier for propane technology?

AC: We expect to see a continuing focus on the cloud, consumer-facing technology and online and mobile tools for both the fuel dealer and the customer. Integration technology is becoming more and more important as companies seek to unify their business tools while still having the flexibility to choose exactly which products they want to use. We expect to see more robust APIs and more integration options moving forward. Data analytics is one of the latest tech buzzwords, and we expect an increased emphasis on analytics tools for reporting and dashboarding, especially those that can aggregate data from multiple sources or make data easier to understand through visualization. Intelligence is already embedded into the tools we use every day, and as technology changes, we expect to see more intelligence and machine learning incorporated into fuel delivery tools.

Elizabeth Manning is the editor of Butane-Propane News.



SUNRISE COOPERATIVE'S MOVE TO REMOTE TANK MONITORING

One distributor's experience in optimizing propane delivery with IIoT technology

BY CHET RESHAMWALA

Dick Schaffer has been delivering fuels for Sunrise Cooperative for 40 years and, like many delivery drivers, he knows his route inside and out. While he looks forward to retiring soon, he was not too happy three years ago when he heard that remote tank monitors were being installed on his route. He said it felt like management did not trust him or that maybe they were out to cut back on his volume of work. As a senior and well-respected driver, Schaffer's opinion carries a lot of weight at Sunrise.

Gone Fishing

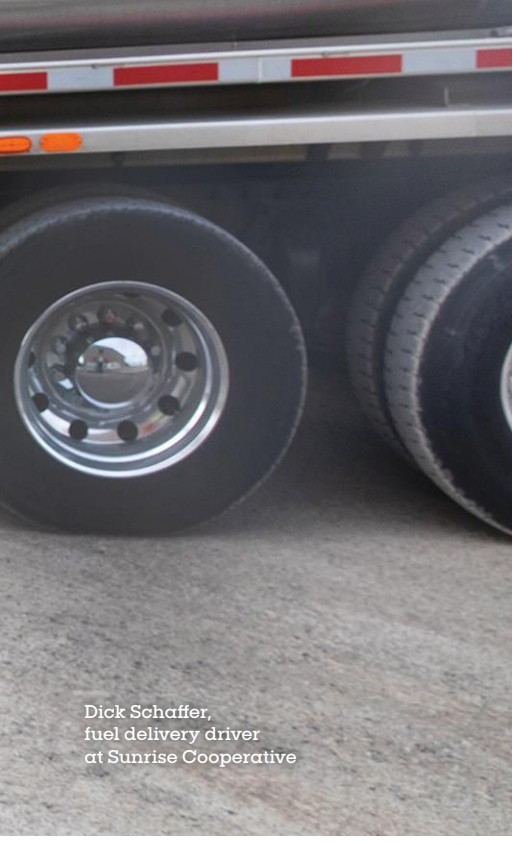
A year into Sunrise implementing the remote tank monitoring program, though, Schaffer came to his boss, Vice President of Energy Jason Kamann, at 2 p.m. on a Friday afternoon to let him know he was leaving early for the day to take his grandson fishing. Both Schaffer and Kamann knew from the remote tank monitor information the company now had access to that every customer on his route was all set for the weekend. Having seen the benefits of remote tank monitoring on reducing driver stress, improving the company's operational efficiency and increasing his customers' satisfaction, Schaffer had become an unexpected champion of industrial IoT (IIoT), which, at Sunrise Cooperative, took the form of remote tank monitoring. Schaffer told Kamann he wished they had brought in the monitoring program decades ago, because then he would have been able to take his own son fishing.

The Decision to Monitor Tanks

Sunrise Cooperative is an agricultural and energy cooperative based in Ohio and 100% farmer owned. The co-op serves an extensive client base with propane, petroleum, lubricants and diesel exhaust fuel products. Three years ago, Sunrise Cooperative made the decision to bring in monitoring solutions from Bergquist and Anova to help it transform its fuel distribution business. Imagine having one of your most senior propane delivery drivers, like Schaffer, drive around making 20 stops a day for 200 straight days and not delivering a single drop of propane. That would be 4,000 trips Schaffer did not need to make. Sunrise Cooperative unearthed this and other hidden inefficiencies in their traditional operations after utilizing Anova Transform. Using a combination of industry expertise and analytical software applied to a client's historical delivery practices, the solution reveals actionable insights and drives greater distribution profitability with each cycle.

Pushing Through Old Boundaries

Since implementation of the remote tank monitoring tool, Kamann has become



Dick Schaffer, fuel delivery driver at Sunrise Cooperative



an outspoken leader on the combined benefits of remote tank monitoring with deep transformative assessment and analysis. "From making that first decision to use remote tank monitoring, to starting our journey with the service, we have pushed through so many boundaries, identifying problem tanks, knowing exactly where to place the tank monitors and when to upsize a client's tank, to being able to save on supply costs with a better understanding of our inventory," he said.

By the Numbers

By monitoring tanks and acting on the insights they provided, Sunrise Cooperative was able to achieve 50% fewer excess fills with fewer deliver stops, increasing profits. Their average fill rate increased significantly from 39% to 57% on monitored tanks. Customer service improved, with 3.5 times fewer out-of-gas events. Operations became more profitable with 50% fewer early drops and two times fewer zero-gallon drops. Beyond these core efficiency improvements, Sunrise Cooperative also identified multiple, sometimes unexpected, benefits of using the monitoring program. "Aside from the fill rate improvements, we also know when competitors were topping off our customers — the tank data shows us that levels increase but we had not made a recent delivery. Having detailed monitor data also provides us proof that our deliveries were made to our customers. If there is a storm, we know exactly which clients need gas, allowing us to reduce risk to our drivers and focus on those customers most in need," said Kamann. "Being able to see exact inventory across our own and our client tanks enables us to manage supply costs and to take advantage of price savings. Finally, we are better able to distribute deliveries, shaving the peak for our busy winter months."

Picking the Right Partners and Champions

According to Kamann, innovation and service matter most for any solution. "Anyone can throw you a low-cost monitor, but innovation and service matter most. Our partners have proven that they deliver that, time and again," he said. "Our biggest hurdle was getting our people to buy in, to trust the monitor, and don't go early or run a stop just because it's next door. Our biggest win was having Schaffer on board. You must pick one person who is respected, get them on board, and show them the numbers. It's not management-controlled. It's a partnership between management and the drivers and doing what is right for the company and the customer"

What to Look for in a Tank Monitoring Solution

- *A true partner* — Look for a partner with the experience and real industry expertise required to help you transform your business long term.
- *A focus on innovation* — Look for a partner that invests in delivering advances in technology and a track record of providing unique, transformative services for the industry.
- *Trusted, reliable solutions* — Look for a proven track record of reliability and robustness in the field. Seek solutions that will also grow with you, with multi-tank monitors and the ability to utilize the strongest communication signal in the field, on the fly.
- *Flexible business models* — Look for flexibility. More companies are getting started or expanding their tank monitoring programs with the hardware-as-a-service approach. You can monitor more, faster, with a monthly subscription service and no capital outlay.

Chet Reshamwala is chief executive officer of Anova, a provider of IIoT solutions for the LPG, fuels, lubricants, chemicals and industrial gases industries. With experience driving transformation initiatives across multiple industries, Reshamwala is a seasoned global tech executive and IIoT expert. Visit anova.com.





MASTERING DELIVERY LOGISTICS

How a wireless, real-time dispatch decision enables better decisions and more efficient workflows

BY JOHN COYLE

Running an efficient delivery department is always a top priority for propane companies. The logistics are complicated during the best of days, but even more so during major events like weather or this challenging past year.

With an overwhelming number of variables to consider, the latest technology can help make sense of the data and turn challenging logistics into opportunities for efficiency and outstanding customer service. A robust dispatching process, in conjunction with wireless mobile devices in the field, makes it all possible.

Challenges

The pandemic has created challenges that have extended right into the delivery department, with sudden safety requirements and a shift to working from home and remote schooling. The change in fuel usage threatened an increase in runouts and unhappy customers. On top of that, our industry is laser-focused on safety, to a level never experienced before. This complicated normal delivery procedures and added a nearly unmeasurable level of stress. Of course, even on a normal, pre-pandemic day, there were challenges, including multiple customers in need of deliveries and a finite number of drivers and trucks to get the job done. Which truck and driver combinations should deliver that product? What is the most efficient route for each? What kind of unplanned issues will come up during the day? How do we handle the growing number of will-calls? It's not always easy to get it right, let alone maximize efficiency, too.

Route Optimization

First, consider the route. A driver may know the area, but mapping optimization can cut miles and minutes out of even the best drivers' routes. Hand the driver a truly optimized route from your dispatch system from the start of the day — a route that takes all current road conditions and hazmat restrictions into account. Give drivers routes that will have them drive the fewest number of miles while delivering the maximum number of gallons. This can not only present the most efficient path, but also save the dispatcher time and effort. And remember, every mile not driven is money in the bank.

Logistics Made Easy

Giving the best route to the driver is the key, but now the fun starts. A robust dispatching system using the latest technology can facilitate excellent decision making and create a nimble department. Technology that offers both a graphical/map and grid/list view can help with this.

A graphical view can give a great deal of information without overcrowding a display. A picture is worth a thousand words, and that is what is needed here to help the dispatcher make expeditious, informed decisions.

What is needed on this dispatch display? There are a few necessary items, such as truck location and position in route, current inventory, deliveries made and deliveries still left to complete. What's preferred by one dispatcher may not be ideal for another, so the

ability to tailor the display to individual preferences is optimal.

Maybe the dispatcher likes to see the product for each customer, or maybe whether a call is a must-deliver-today stop. Good decisions can be made rapidly if all the information important to the user is there, without having to go back and forth between screens.

Other information can be valuable as well, including details that can help with decisions or troubleshooting throughout the day. This data needs to be at the ready to avoid losing valuable time.

With the latest dispatch displays, roll-over functionality means valuable information can pop up by rolling over a field, without overcrowding the screen. The more information, accessible on one screen, the better for quick, accurate decision-making.

Reoptimize Routes

The dispatch screen helps as all the daily hurdles are thrown at dispatchers, like truck breakdowns, will-calls and runouts. These can cause upheavals in organized, efficient routes, but the delivery dispatch display can easily share all the important data for quick decision-making. Where is the driver in the route? How much inventory is left on the truck? What deliveries can potentially be skipped today? And conversely, which ones are must-deliver stops?

After using this information to add the new calls, the route can be reoptimized and the adjusted order can be sent back to the driver to ensure the most efficient route. By adding stops to the route throughout the day, and optimizing them in real time, drivers can save miles and time that could be spent coming back another day. These on-the-fly changes also win customer loyalty, helping the company make more dollars per delivery today and in the future.

Truck Technology

While the dispatch screen is the heart of the delivery department, the functionality reaches maximum value by adding a wireless connection to mobile technology in the field, such as tablets and phones. This enables the real-time connection to the office and populates the dispatch display with accurate, up-to-date data that leads to the best dispatcher decisions possible.

Minimize Mistakes

Technology in the trucks can also help minimize costly mistakes. Accidentally filling the wrong tank can make the driver run out of product before the route is finished, or even cut sharply into margin if a customer does not agree to pay for the accidental delivery. Fortunately, this can be avoided with the GPS capabilities of mobile devices today.

GPS locations can be associated with an account and a fill location to stop costly accidents. Going one step further, tanks can be easily labeled in the field and then scanned for validation before filling. When combined, you have a foolproof plan to always fill the right tanks the first time.

Stay Connected to Drivers

What about efficient dispatcher to driver communication? Drivers' eyes need to be on the road, so back-and-forth voice communication between the dispatcher and the driver is a challenge and danger to avoid. With a wireless dispatching connection and real-time information, dispatchers can communicate via messages from the back office directly to the driver's mobile tablet, and the dispatcher can see what messages have been read and which have not.

This two-way communication system allows most questions to be answered without verbal communication. For example, a dispatcher can add a phone order to a driver's list, the route can be reoptimized and wirelessly pushed out to the driver's mobile device. No voice communication is needed, and the route is updated for maximum efficiency.

Speaking of communication, what about those situations that need fixing right away, such as the locked gate, the blocked fill location, or the mean dog? Messaging can be done right through the drivers' mobile device, saving talk time. The dispatcher can contact the customer, rectify the situation and notify the driver via a message on the device.

Communication With Customers

Taking communication one step further, technology today supports automatic communication with the customer. Mobile technology in the truck means that when the driver indicates that a delivery cannot be made, a text or email can automatically be sent to the customer to quickly remedy the situation. The emphasis here is on the word "quickly," because time is money. Additionally, when a delivery is made, a text or email can be sent to the customer, so they know they will come home to a warm, comfortable home.

Up to the Challenge

This year has highlighted one more important requirement — ease of use. With the numerous safety issues and quarantines, regular drivers and dispatchers may have needed to take time off. An intuitive dispatch and mobile solution means that temporary workers could more easily function without requiring hours of training. A backup plan is essential, and technology can make the shift less disruptive.

A wireless, real-time dispatch system gives ready, easy access to all the necessary information to lead to the most informed decisions. It allows for the highest level of efficiency, by enabling the best decisions, minimizing mistakes and automating communication.

John Coyle is the vice president of sales for ADD Systems, a supplier of back office and mobile software solutions for the petroleum and convenience store industries. With over 25 years of sales, marketing, manufacturing and product development experience, Coyle has a passion for process efficiency management and customer satisfaction. Today Coyle is able to align his passions through supporting ADD customers across North America to help them become more profitable, while enhancing their customer experience. Visit addsystems.com.



3 GENERATIONS, 4 NEW OWNERS AND LONG-TERM SUCCESS

Why strong family leadership requires an all-in team effort

BY STEVE RELYEA



Jane and Brian Newton (seated) turned over the leadership and ownership of Collett Services in January 2020 to their four sons (from left): Logan McCormick, Mike Newton, Matt Newton and Tyler McCormick.

When ownership of Collett Services transitioned to a new generation, it also moved from one owner to four. What could have been a complicated situation has instead been an ongoing partnership made up of four brothers, Tyler McCormick, Logan McCormick, Matt Newton and Mike Newton. The brothers now operate Xenia, Ohio-based Collett Services and its two divisions: Collett Propane and Collett Sealcoating.

"We do things through committee," explained Tyler. "We talk [through things] and try to make the best decision. It's a team effort."

"We have a really good understanding," said Matt. "Everything is amicable. Seven days a week, 16 hours a day, we are talking with each other in our group message."

Collett's four current owners and the previous owner, their mother Jane Newton, attribute the transition's success to several things. These include planning ahead, networking with members of other family businesses, allowing the new owners to ease into their responsibilities and giving each member of the next generation a say in what they will be doing in the business.

"I didn't want the business to affect their relationship as siblings; if it had, it would have gone on the selling block," said Jane Newton. "As it turns out, they're so much closer than before. They are always bouncing ideas off each other."

CARRYING IT FORWARD

Jane joined Collett Propane in 1982 and became the second-generation owner of the family business in 1985. Her father, Don Collett, and his brother, Chuck Collett, started the company in 1952. They owned a hardware store and were introduced to propane by a salesman. "I grew up in the business from birth," Jane said. "I was riding in bobtails from an early age."

Before officially joining the company, she earned a business degree from Wright State University and then worked at another business for a couple of years. When she joined Collett Propane, it had one location in Wilmington, Ohio.

Soon after she joined, a second location was added in Xenia, Ohio, in 1985, and a third in Lebanon, Ohio, in 2005. "The county was growing," she said. "There was a lot of home construction in rural areas where there was propane usage. I always felt it was important to have a presence and contribute to the community. That's why it was important to build out."

She became the second-generation owner when her father died. "I was an only child, so if it was to continue as a family business, I would have to carry it forward," she said. "I hadn't had a lot of formal training; I learned by doing what needed to be done daily."

Collett Sealcoating was added in 2002, initially to keep the propane division's employees busy and to generate revenue during the summertime. It was started by Brian Newton, Jane's husband, who came up with the idea and tried it out. "I bought a truck, a tank and everything to get started in the business," he said. "One guy and I ran it so that we would know how to do the job and how to price it."

At first, the sealcoating division focused on residential customers. Collett Propane's drivers would identify the houses that had asphalt driveways as they made deliveries.

Using that information, the two divisions would make joint mailings to those customers to promote both propane and sealcoating. Later, the sealcoating business began gaining commercial customers, too.

"Collett Sealcoating is its own company now," Brian said. "We rarely use people from the propane side. We now have 16,000 square feet under a roof for all the equipment."

Throughout the years, both divisions of Collett Services have served customers and been active members of the communities in their service areas. In 2015 and 2016, Collett Propane was a finalist for the Eclipse Integrity Awards presented by the Better Business Bureau of Dayton and Miami Valley.



Collett Propane began as a hardware store in New Burlington, Ohio. In 1952, first-generation owners Don and Chuck Collett were approached by a salesman about getting into the propane business. Collett Propane was born with the start of propane bottle service.

"Our employees are dedicated to making sure the customer gets the best service," said Jane. "I know that every person who answers the phone or makes deliveries knows what the other person has promised the customer and makes sure it gets done."

Collett Propane offers 24/7 service, with a driver and a service technician always on call. "There's always someone local," said Logan. "People like that. When a will-call customer calls, we deliver within a few days. If there's a leak, we will be there same day."

The propane division also offers "Ten Buck Tuesday," a special offer in which it will fill a 20# tank on Tuesdays for $10. "When we participate in Christmas parades with our truck, we hear people shouting out 'Ten Buck Tuesday!'" said Tyler. "It has taken on a life of its own."

Collet Sealcoating provides customers the confidence that they are dealing with a long-standing, local company. "The sealcoating industry in general does not have a good reputation," said Matt. "We try to use how long our company has been here to set ourselves apart."

Collett Services is also an active member of local chambers of commerce, a supporter of 4-H clubs and a sponsor of baseball teams.

WORKING WELL TOGETHER

After running and expanding Collett Services, Jane and Brian retired on Jan. 1, 2020.

Today, the new, third-generation owners each have their own role at Collett Services, while also working together to lead the company. They have each spent years in and around the business and have selected duties that align with their skills and interests.

Tyler is president and handles duties such as pricing and human resources. "My earliest memories are running around the office interacting with customers and employees," he said.

While in high school and college, he worked at the company during breaks. He didn't plan to make a career of it, but he changed his mind after hearing employees tell stories about his grandfather's time at the company.

Tyler officially started with the company in 2008 as a customer service representative (CSR). Over time, he became service manager, branch manager and then president.

Remembering his childhood, he said, "I spent snow days not on a sled, but pulling hose and delivering propane. I appreciate that now because it built my work ethic and taught me to do



In 1988, second-generation owner Jane Newton opened a second propane office in Xenia, Ohio.

3 KEY ACTIONS FOR LONG-TERM SUCCESS

The successful transition of ownership to the third generation was helped by the interests of the new owners, but also by a good deal of planning. "Our transition was four or five years in the making," Logan said. The brothers and Jane shared with BPN three key actions that helped the process:

1. An Education in Family Ownership

A few years before the transition, they enrolled in a class at a local university that focused on family businesses moving from one generation to another. The Next Generation Institute (NGI) at the University of Cincinnati offered both education and networking with other members of family businesses.

"We met once a month to go over everything," said Logan. "They went over the statistics about how the further along you go in generations, the more likely the business is to fail. We also learned from other businesses what they did."

Jane adds, "It opened their eyes to the different realms of owning a business — finance, banking, human resources, customer service. They took one topic a month and worked on it as a family."

2. A Gradual Transition

At Collett Services, the transition was made gradually. For about three years, Jane and Brian let the four brothers run the business. "We each had our own responsibilities and areas of expertise prior to their retirement," Tyler said. "A lot of the day-to-day things we were already handling; it was the yearly things, such as banking and insurance that were new to us."

By the time of the transition, most of the responsibilities had already been turned over.

"Our parents gave us the right amount of hands-on versus hands-off," said Matt. "They let us figure it out, but always came in when needed."

Mike adds, "We learned a lot not only from them, but also by making mistakes. That stings, but you solve the problem, learn, build confidence and grow."

3. A Variety of Experience

Third, each of the new owners experienced different parts of the business and chose the things they'd like to continue doing.

"We were all given the opportunity to choose what we want to do and then take it and make it our own. We couldn't be more grateful for that," Matt said.

Tyler concludes, "We all bring something a little bit different to the table. It works. We work well together."



Today, Collett Propane operates three propane locations, with seven trucks on the road full time during delivery season.

whatever it takes to make our customers comfortable and happy."

Logan manages one of the propane branches and oversees Collett Propane's service work. "I've always been around the business," he said.

He started full time in 2010, three years after graduating high school and then attending college for a while. Logan began as a CSR, moved around to the different branches and then began managing one.

"That's when I learned about the operations side — driving a truck, setting tanks and doing service work," he said. "I've been doing that for five or six years."

As he learned these different skills, he enjoyed the jobs and the variety of things he would be called upon to do. "I can do a little bit of everything, and I enjoy the mix," he said. "I'm driving a truck today, but I could be setting tanks tomorrow and doing a budget the next day."

Matt runs the sealcoating division. He also handles IT for both divisions. He did some sealcoating while in school. After graduation, he worked in the office of the propane division, answering phones and filling cylinders. "I never left," he said. "It became intriguing, because there was always something to learn."

Over time, Matt delivered cylinders, ran the service operation and managed an office. Along the way, he developed his interest in IT. He helped open one store and rebuilt the IT infrastructure at another. After a management turnover in the sealcoating division, he jumped in to lead that business.

"Any job title there is in the company, I've had it. I've been here for 17 years now, and I'm 37," he said. "There's something new going on all the time. When problems arise, I see them as opportunities to learn something you wouldn't have learned that day."

Mike works at a local Air Force base while also working part time at Collett Services, handling marketing. In his early years, he rode along with his brothers in the company's trucks and later worked in the sealcoating business.

After finishing graduate school and starting work at the Air Force base, Mike became interested in social media and creating web content. He learned that craft by watching YouTube videos and using free software to learn how to edit videos, make posts and optimize the content for searches.

"For a lot of companies, your website is the first thing people see," he commented. "We focus on how we can make customers' lives easier. The content is always being updated, and we get a lot of positive responses."

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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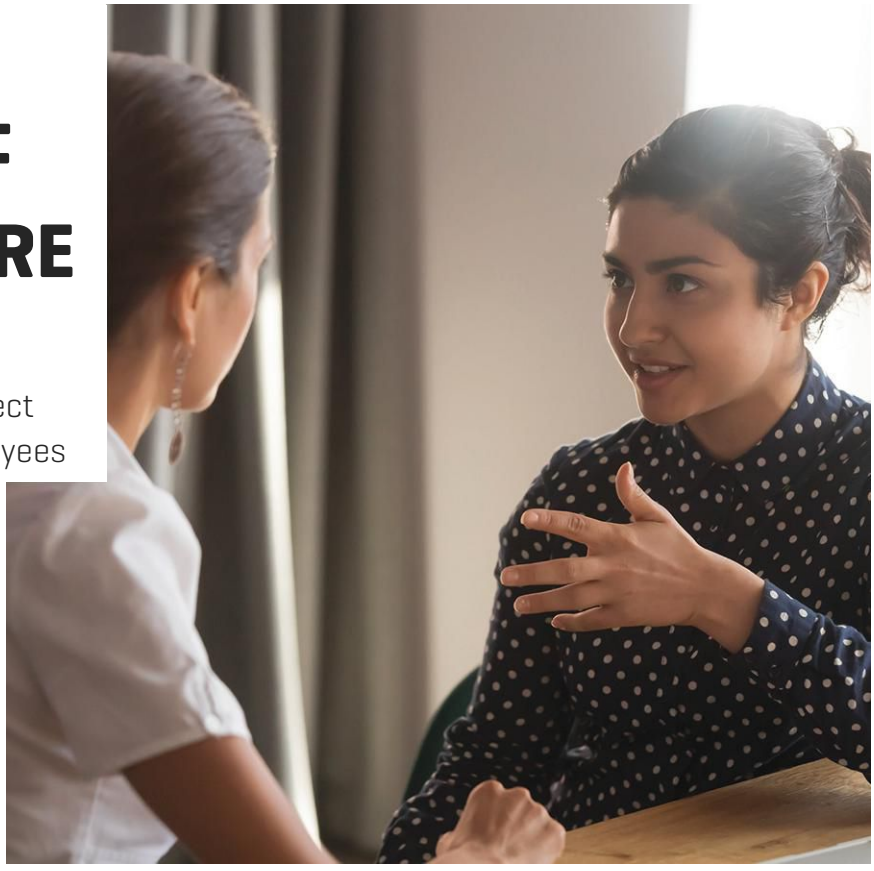
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6 WAYS TO MAKE SEXUAL HARASSMENT TRAINING MORE EFFECTIVE

What you can do to better protect and properly inform your employees

BY ANDREW RAWSON



There's no question that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted many businesses in the energy industry, causing delays and uncertainties. That said, the slowdown has created an opportunity for companies to roll out compliance training and other initiatives to help strengthen workplace culture, retain qualified employees and attract new ones when business activity picks up.

Since the #MeToo movement put workplace harassment in the spotlight, laws have been passed across the United States requiring employers to provide sexual harassment prevention training. The current list includes New York, New York City, California, Illinois, Connecticut, Maine and Delaware, with other states expected to follow.

Regardless of whether training is mandatory — or if employees are working on-site, from home or in different locations — sexual harassment training for all employees sends a strong message about the organization's commitment to fostering a respectful, diverse and inclusive workplace.

New approaches to online harassment training are transforming the boring, slideshow model into a modern, interactive learning experience in which employees gain a deeper understanding of what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior, the consequences of misconduct and their role in creating a respectful, inclusive workplace culture. For a more engaging, relevant and effective harassment training program, consider the following six tips:

1. TAILOR CONTENT TO THE INDUSTRY

Regular, interactive training that is focused on changing behaviors and tailored to the organization and its workforce is one of the core principles that have proven effective in preventing and addressing harassment, according to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's (EEOC) task force on workplace harassment.

With a variety of e-Learning and video tools available, online compliance training can engage employees with realistic video scenarios, images and examples that are relevant to their work experiences. Including a chief executive officer's video message can further reinforce the importance of participating in training and the organization's expectations for conduct.

2. OFFER MOBILE-OPTIMIZED TRAINING FOR 24/7 ACCESS

With unpredictable schedules now the norm, mobile-optimized training makes it convenient for employees to access and complete courses on any device. Mobile technology also enables human resource (HR) managers to easily assign new courses, monitor employees' progress and send out reminders, updates and bite-size videos on timely topics throughout the year.

3. RAISE AWARENESS OF DIFFERENT FORMS OF HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment — whether it occurs in the office, on the jobsite, at a trade show, online or through social media— goes beyond unwanted physical contact. The EEOC defines sexual harassment as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other conduct of a sexual nature that directly or indirectly interferes with an individual's work, creates a hostile work environment or is

made a term or condition of employment.

Offensive comments about a person's sex or about women in general can also constitute illegal harassment. And a person of any gender can be a harasser or a target of harassment including customers, inspectors, contractors and vendors.

4. TEACH BYSTANDER INTERVENTION TACTICS

Bystander intervention training has its roots in the military and on college campuses as a tactic to prevent sexual assault. Today, workplace experts consider bystander intervention one of the most effective ways to stop misconduct before it rises to the level of illegal harassment and discrimination.

Teaching employees different ways to safely step in and speak up while or after witnessing incidents of harassment can help defuse potentially harmful situations and prevent future incidents. Being an active bystander has another benefit, too: coworkers can be allies for targets of harassment and show their support and empathy.

5. PROMOTE DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Training employees and managers on what they can do to support a more diverse and inclusive workplace can also help prevent harassment and discrimination, raise awareness of unconscious bias and microaggressions and foster civility and respect. Diversity and inclusion goes beyond gender and race, encompassing different backgrounds, experiences, sexual orientation and ideas.

6. ENCOURAGE REPORTING

An important part of stopping sexual harassment is implementing and communicating procedures for reporting incidents and reassuring employees that their complaints will be taken seriously and they won't be retaliated against. Managers who may handle reports of harassment can benefit from additional training on how to promptly address and investigate complaints and avoid retaliatory behavior.

With the support of business owners and managers who lead by example, a modern, engaging training program is an important step in preventing harassment and other misconduct and creating a respectful workplace culture in which all employees feel that they belong.

Andrew Rawson is the chief learning officer and co-founder of Traliant, an innovator in online sexual harassment training, diversity training and other essential workplace topics that drive positive behavior and foster a respectful, inclusive workplace culture. Visit traliant.com.



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OVERCOMING THE LONELINESS OF LEADERSHIP

Why taking care of yourself will help you take better care of your employees

BY MELANIE PARISH



Leadership is lonely. I have the privilege of coaching top leaders in organizations around the world — and this loneliness is ubiquitous no matter the industry. In good times, it feels like you are figuring it out and your work stays on an even keel.

In difficult times, leaders are stressed out and find it difficult to be fulfilled in anything they do. Sometimes, it feels like you've pushed yourself to the professional edge and stayed there. Whether a leader is frustrated to a breaking point or they are hitting it out of the park, leadership is challenging; leadership is difficult; and leadership can be lonely. It is lonely work to lead others.

WHAT MAKES IT SO LONELY?

I have spent a fair bit of time thinking about this question and trying to find an answer — both for myself and for my clients. Being a modern-day leader in the propane industry inherently places you in the role of forging ahead. And by definition, this is an activity you will often do alone.

You may have a team that comes along with you, or you may have a boss who supports you as you walk ahead, but the work of leadership is to contemplate the metaphorical landscape and find your own path. Forging ahead can be exhaustive and taxing. It can sometimes feel impossible.

Often people have a sense of accomplishment as individual contributors. Because they are good at what they do, those contributors are an obvious choice for promotion, and rightly so. But leaders may have a harder time defining their work, and it may sometimes feel like they shift from company hero to big brother or corporate overlord overnight.

A new leader might have been highly skilled at making their work visible as an independent contributor. Then they find themselves illuminating the work of their team. But there can be a feeling of invisibility as they gain their feet.

This is one of the reasons leadership (especially for new managers) is so difficult. This feeling of invisibility can leave leaders longing for the time when the work seemed so clear. Often, they are left with the compelling question, "Am I providing any real value to the organization?"

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO DIMINISH THE LONELINESS?

In my conversations with leaders, I find that acknowledging the challenges of leadership helps to reframe what they are feeling. New leaders need to first understand the work itself. Thinking strategically takes time and effort, but it doesn't produce visible artifacts of accomplishment.

Planning to develop direct reports is similar in producing value to the organization, but also doesn't have the feeling of accomplishment and completion. I find there is a shift that leaders make from valuing their own work highly to valuing the work of their team more. This can be challenging from the place of new leadership.

Sometimes, leaders need to learn to manage up in order to help make themselves more visible to their own managers or bosses, to help them overcome the feeling of invisibility, and to solidify their own path by confirming they are in alignment with other leaders. These discussions at all levels of the organization help to solidify the work and make the work of the leader visible in both directions.

WHAT ELSE SHOULD LEADERS THINK ABOUT?

I am a huge believer in self-care being an important part of good leadership. Sometimes the stress of leadership has people reaching for a martini at the end of a long day. This is fine occasionally, but leadership is difficult and can be heavy. A strong regime of regular self-care, nutrition and exercise may be what will help you set yourself apart.

Everyone has to find the self-care plan for themselves that will leave them recharged and ready to give of themselves to further the goal and strategic intents of the organization. Your leadership journey is your own. But make sure you make the time for some regular and sustainable self-care in your life. Make it happen even when you are busy and stressed.

There is a Buddhist proverb that goes something like this: "You should sit in meditation for 20 minutes every day — unless you're too busy; then you should sit for an hour." The same is true for self-care. The busier you are, the more you need to make time for frequent self-care.

HOW CAN YOU MAKE LEADERSHIP FEEL LESS LONELY?

Coaching and mentorship can help your career be less lonely. Many times, new leaders think they need to enhance their performance. Often, they are solo contributors who are also used to being top performers.

Having support can help them increase the quality of their work, but one of the biggest services a mentor or coach can provide leaders is to stand in the center of their lives with them and be all in for their professional journey. They can help assuage the feelings of loneliness by standing with them while they figure out their own leadership.

If you are feeling loneliness as a leader, hire a coach. It works. The return on investment for coaching is proven. It may be in a contract negotiation, a job shift or simply a new offering. Coaches or mentors are able to help leaders — whether they are emerging or long term — succeed and to increase their financial success professionally.

Being a leader can be incredibly rewarding and it is intense and sometimes lonely work. Making sure you learn new ways to think about your leadership and shore up your own self-care will help you feel more successful.

Melanie Parish is a public speaker, podcast host, author and coach. An expert in problem-solving, constraints management, operations and brand development, Parish has coached organizations ranging from startup companies to the Fortune 50. She is the author of The Experimental Leader: Be A New Kind of Boss to Cultivate an Organization of Innovators. Follow her on Twitter @melanieparish.



MIDYEAR PROPANE SUPPLY UPDATE

Amid a pull of propane exports to Asia, U.S. marketers consider 2021-22 decisions

BY PAT THORNTON


John Powell


Rusty Braziel


Steve Kossuth

For most retail propane marketers, spring is a chance to catch a breath, evaluate a busy winter and then continue planning, knowing the importance of being prepared for the next winter season lurking around the corner. Rusty Braziel, chief executive officer of RBN Energy, correctly warned BPN readers in December 2020 that record exports were creating a scenario where prices could quickly shoot up. Mont Belvieu propane, priced at 58 cents per gallon on Dec. 3, traded at over a dollar a gallon at times during the first quarter of 2021 amid soaring exports and a deep freeze in the United States.

Braziel, along with John Powell, senior vice president and head of marketing, supply and logistics for Crestwood Equity Partners, were two of several supply experts who spoke to propane industry members last summer on webinars hosted by the National Propane Gas Association (NPGA). Both shared concerns about the impact of U.S. propane exports for winter 2020-2021 and both have concerns ahead of winter 2021-2022 as well.

"Marketers should really watch winter supply needs as the overall U.S. inventories are close to the five-year lows," Powell said. "So, there will not be as much storage gas in the field this coming year. We could have some increased supply concerns if we have normal to below-normal temperatures this coming winter. The U.S. is still a large part of the international supply picture. However — with lower inventories in the overall U.S. markets, U.S. propane will need to be competitively priced versus other alternatives to help build our U.S. base inventory. With that being said, we will probably see strong export volumes, but not record volumes, until the U.S.-based propane becomes more competitive versus other global production areas. Increased OPEC production will also increase the global supply, so that will need to be considered as well, as we see their production increase during the year."

Steve Kossuth, vice president of Global LPG Supply at UGI Corp. (parent company of AmeriGas), hosted the NPGA webinars last summer in his role as chairman of the NPGA Supply and Logistics Committee. "Since the polar vortex winter of 2013-2014, the propane industry has made valuable investments in the supply chain. That said, complacency and market volatility are the enemies of surety of supply," Kossuth said. "In recent years, there have been periods of volatility that our industry has overcome, each providing valuable perspective towards improving the propane supply chain. As we recover/emerge out of the pandemic, the current market forces of future curve backwardation and strong export demand would indicate that the midstream side of the business is not incentivized to build inventory; recent reports from the Energy Information Administration (EIA) confirm this to be the case."

Kossuth believes retailers must continually question their supply plans and ensure that they are comfortable with the risks. "Confirming volumes with suppliers, taking storage positions (especially in off-market hub locations), and firming up rail, truck and pipeline commitments are all part of the strategy to combat potential upstream volatility," he said. "I am extremely proud and pleased with the NPGA's and the Propane Education Research Council's efforts towards providing information to membership. Experts like Rusty and John, to name a few, have graciously provided time and insightful perspective

to retailers through these organizations allowing people to make informed decisions regarding supply. This year will have a lot of similarities and differences with prior years, but one thing is certain: proper preparation and planning with great information will always prove to be beneficial as they allow the hard-working people in our supply and logistics teams throughout the propane industry to tackle any unknowns that will undoubtedly emerge."

Braziel shared RBN Energy's March 31 propane blog, "Should I Stay or Should I Go?" Read excerpts from it below:

"Wow, what a ride! That's what came to mind yesterday as the 2020-2021 propane season drew to its official end. But the excitement and uncertainty aren't over, folks. Not by a long shot. Propane exports are still running sky-high; end-of-season inventories are at the low end, with a whopping 2-MMbbl withdrawal number in EIA's stats yesterday; and a backwardated forward curve is not doing anything to encourage U.S. marketers and midstreamers to rebuild stocks. We get it — no one wants to think about next winter yet, just as spring is really springing. But still, you've got to wonder, could the dynamics that have been roiling the propane market be setting us up for skinny inventories and price spikes in the 2021-22 propane season? Today, we examine the challenges facing the market over the next few months.

With the crazy winter of COVID-19 and Deep Freeze finally in the rearview mirror, propaners have been eagerly anticipating a return to the more tranquil, stable market conditions promised by the smooth, flat forward curve shown in the left graph in Figure 1 (dashed green line). It's probably not going to happen. Instead, the U.S. propane market is poised for another period of intense volatility, due to competition between international and domestic markets as exports compete with supplies that would otherwise be replacing inventories drawn down during the 2020-2021 propane demand season.

If that's the way it plays out, U.S. inventories will be fully rebuilt only if Mont Belvieu propane prices itself out of some export markets. In other words, for inventories to grow back to comfortable levels, some volumes that would otherwise be exported would instead be used to replenish stocks, which implies high U.S. prices relative to international markets — that is, a closed "arb" constraining the number of export cargoes. The catch is that the use of propane supplies to fully rebuild stocks must make economic sense, and that assumption is open to question. Looking again at the left graph in Figure 1, the front end of the 2021 Mont Belvieu propane forward curve is in backwardation and the back half is flat. So, prices are lower in the future than they are today. This suggests that there is little economic incentive for U.S. marketers and midstreamers to build inventories, other than the usual seasonal/operational considerations.

When we plug that forward curve into our supply and demand model, along with RBN's base case forecasts for domestic demand and exports, we come up with the forecast for PADD 3 (Gulf Coast) inventories shown in the right graph in Figure 1. The model predicts that PADD 3 inventories will remain at or near their five-year lows during 2021 (dashed red line) — or just enough to keep U.S. stocks from falling to dangerously low levels before the 2021-2022 propane heating season — as summer export volumes reach all-time highs. But that's the base case, not our only case, because there's a real wild card in play during 2021: U.S. propane production. It is entirely possible that production will continue to increase enough to meet both domestic and international demand, keeping inventories from scraping the bottom of the barrel as we show in Figure 1 (right graph). Recent production trends support the possibility of such an optimistic view. With crude oil production falling dramatically during the COVID meltdown last spring, it was generally assumed that

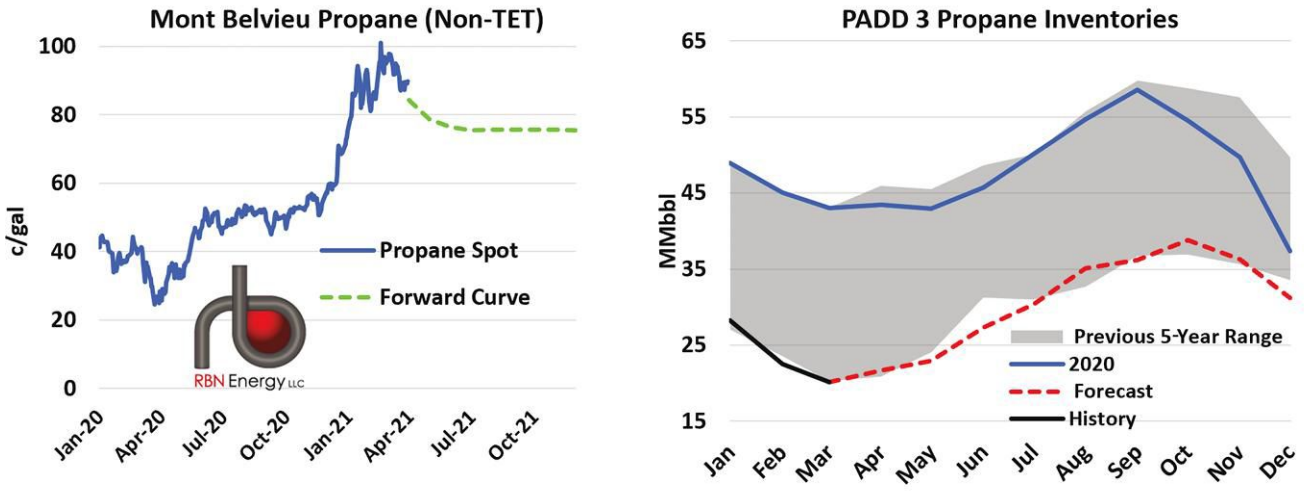


Figure 1: Mont Belvieu Price and Forward Curve, PADD 3 Base Case Inventories

propane production would follow suit. Not so. Although there was a dip in propane supplies, it did not last long. Over the past nine months, propane production from gas processing has been far more resilient than crude production. And that could portend a similar trend this year."

CRUDE PRODUCTION DOWN, PROPANE UP

"Following the dip in propane production last spring, gas plant propane volumes recovered back to almost 1.8 MMbld by March 2021, equal to the pre-meltdown peak production level in March 2020," Braziel said. "In contrast, crude volumes have continued to languish at about 11 MMbld (11.1 MMbld in yesterday's EIA stats for the week ending in March 16), about 15% below pre-meltdown levels of 13 MMbld."

"As we discussed a couple of weeks ago in Propane: It's A Gas, there are two

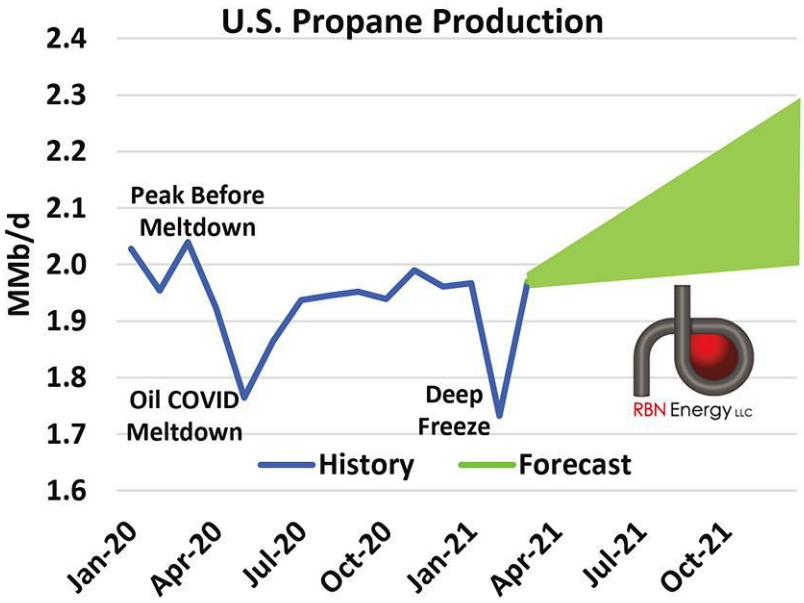


Figure 2: U.S. Propane Production



primary factors that have allowed propane to recover at a much higher rate than crude oil," he said. "The first is natural gas production, which has rebounded faster than crude. Crude oil wells that produce associated gas tend to get 'gassier' over time. With crude drilling down, the fleet of crude wells has been aging, and thus producing more gas per barrel of crude (e.g., the gas-to-oil ratio is increasing). Also contributing to increasing gas volumes is a decline in flared gas, both in the Permian and Bakken."

Braziel said a second factor that has supported higher propane production is that proportionally more propane is being recovered from that increasing volume of gas. "Particularly in the Permian, the propane yield has been increasing. For one thing, lots of new, highly efficient gas processing capacity makes recovery of more light ends (both propane and ethane) possible. And at the same time, the gas being produced has a higher proportion of those light ends. Thus, we get a higher percentage of ethane and propane and a slightly lower percentage of butanes and natural gasoline. The implication is that every Mcf of natural gas produced has a slightly higher yield of propane in the y-grade mix."

> 'As we emerge out of the pandemic, the current market forces of future curve backwardation and strong export demand would indicate that the midstream side of the business is not incentivized to build inventory.'

Figure 2 depicts U.S. propane production from January 2020 through March 2021, with the most recent couple of months estimated based on EIA weekly data, along with RBN's range of forecasts for the remainder of 2021. "Note that 2020 average volumes of 1.95 MMbld were pulled down by the COVID meltdown during the spring of that year, while 2021 volumes were lower in February due to the Deep Freeze," Braziel said. "We expect that U.S. propane production will increase in 2021, most likely growing to about 2.05 MMbld, or 100 Mbld higher on average than in 2020. We expect that 2021 production will be particularly

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strong (about 175 Mbld higher than last year) during the summer months (April to September). And, as indicated by the green forecast wedge, production could grow well above that trajectory."

2021 PROPANE EXPORTS – CONSTRAINED BY SUPPLY

According to Braziel, regardless of whether production comes in at the high end of the range, the low end, or somewhere in between, it is that production volume that will be a primary determinant of 2021 propane exports. "Gulf Coast dock capacity limitations that have constrained capacity in the past have been relieved, and the demand for U.S. propane exports, particularly from Asia, is growing."

"Regarding LPG docks, a total of more than 400 Mbld of new Gulf Coast export capacity was added last year by Targa Resources (at Galena Park) and Energy Transfer (at Nederland), bringing total LPG export capacity in the region to more than 2 MMbld," he said. "Although some of that LPG capacity is reserved for butane, we believe there is at least 1.7 MMbld of capacity to move propane from Gulf Coast terminals. That is more than enough to handle the record 1.4 MMbld of propane that moved off the Gulf Coast in December, plus another 20% more."

Nor is the demand for U.S. volumes likely to be a constraint on exports. Over the past year, the global market for U.S. propane demonstrated an ability to absorb about 1.3 MMbld of U.S. exports on average, and considerably higher volumes on a few occasions. "Most of the increase has moved to Asia, which receives about 60% of U.S. propane export volumes," Braziel said. "Asia's propane demand increased in 2020, primarily due to new petrochemical facilities in China. In just the last half of 2020, steam cracker and propane dehydrogenation (PDH) projects added more than 135 Mbld of LPG demand, mostly met by propane."

And he noted a lot more Chinese LPG demand is coming online in 2021, with the possibility of several more facilities (most of them PDH plants) in the 2022-24 timeframe. "Thus, as long as the post-COVID-19 global economy continues to reopen, there should be no constraints on global markets to take incremental U.S. propane exports."

Consequently, he notes that given adequate dock capacity and strong global demand, U.S. exports will be constrained only by supply. "The supply available for export will be limited by U.S. production, and by the need for the U.S. market to replenish stocks drawn down during the winter 2020-2021 propane season," Braziel said.

As shown in the right graph in Figure 1, those stocks are rebuilding from a



relatively low level. "So if too big a share of production is loaded onto those big VLGCs and shipped to Asia and other overseas markets, U.S. inventories going into to the 2021-2022 propane season may end up too low. If that were to happen, the propane market would be particularly vulnerable to a scary level of volatility, with the potential for supply shortages and spiking prices," he continued.

"Of course, such a scenario would not play out if export volumes are cut so adequate inventories can rebuild," Braziel said. He believes all it would take for that to happen is a propane price high enough to shrink or close the arb — i.e., the difference between prices in the U.S. and export destination markets, less the costs of loading propane at LPG docks and shipping it overseas.

"Complicating that scenario, though, is what we mentioned earlier about the front end of the 2021 Mont Belvieu forward curve being in backwardation. With prices for propane on the forward curve lower in a few weeks than they are today, there's not much incentive to build inventories, other than the usual seasonal/operational considerations that retailers and midstreamers deal with each year. How this plays out will be our weekly — even daily — obsession this spring and summer, and if you're in the propane business we are sure that it will be of major interest to you as well."

MAY CONFERENCE TO COVER LATEST PROPANE ANALYSIS

This month, RBN Energy will be bringing together the views of senior industry executives, including Powell and Kossuth from the propane industry, to share their views along with their latest analysis of production, infrastructure, pipeline capacity and exports. "We are calling our conference 'It's a Gas: Propane.'" Braziel said. "It will be the first in a series of three planned virtual conferences to be presented in our Studio Session conference format, where we'll discuss RBN's outlook for various aspects of the propane market, and then hear from industry leaders. Our goal is to bridge the gap between fundamentals analysis and boots-on-the-ground market intelligence."

The "It's a Gas: Propane" virtual event is scheduled for May 12, 2021, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. CT, with an hour for lunch at noon. The conference will be recorded and will be available for members for a few weeks post-event.

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.

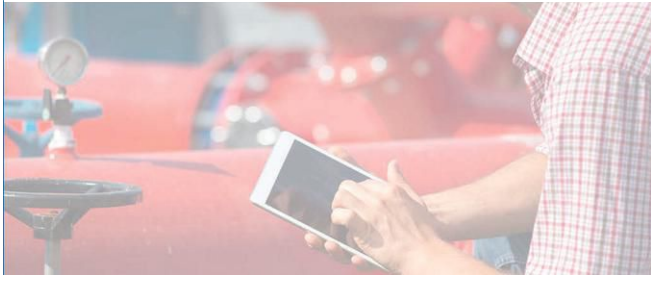
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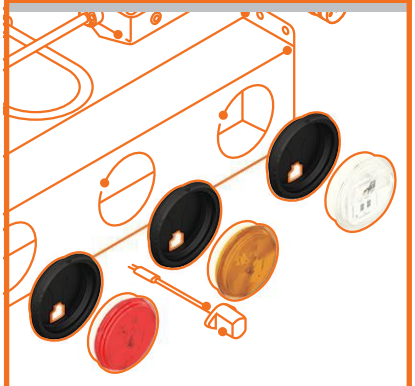
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Describe your current role. I am the president and third-generation owner of Globe Gas Corporation. My mom and aunt are current owners as well, but I run the day-to-day business. My grandparents started our company in 1954 out of their home in Long Beach. My grandfather had a background working in oil and gas in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Today, I manage 15 employees in Long Beach and Temecula. We sell more than 3 million gallons of propane a year, primarily to commercial accounts in Southern California, with some retail sales out of our yard in Long Beach. We refill forklift, BBQ and bulk storage tanks. We also install bulk tanks up to 2,000 gallons for resale and large volume customers, and sell tanks, cylinders, parts and fittings.

How did you get your start? I was very close to my grandparents — my grandma was like my second mom. She would take me to the office as a young child. I would watch her work, and as such, I learned the ins and outs of our business from the ground up. I always knew in my heart that I would run our company someday. Even my grandma would say, "Are you sure this is really what you want to do?" She supported me, but she knew how much work it took to run the business — my grandfather worked long, tiresome hours.

What are some of the biggest professional challenges you've experienced over your career? COVID-19 was a big challenge. We had to cut back expenses and furlough employees during the pandemic. If I'm not selling gas, I can't pay my employees or stay in business. We had several months where we were down more than 20% in income. We qualified for the Paycheck Protection Program loans, which was a great help. Being a small, privately-owned propane company in a competitive field is challenging. California is a tough state to do business in. The industry is heavily regulated with emission control and air quality.

What do you think would surprise someone about the job you do? Well, I'm a third-generation, family-owned and operated business. Not many companies skip a generation and have continued to run over 60 years. It has been tough at times, but I've learned how to stay focused, manage wisely and compete fairly.

What's the best piece of advice you have ever received? My grandma taught me early on that you need to respect people and be fair in business. That goes a long way. Service is No. 1. Staying in touch with your customers and actually answering the phone in person is so important. On holidays, we still send Christmas cards and personally hand out wine from Temecula Valley. I want our customers to know we appreciate them and their business.

Name one of your greatest personal successes. I'm a breast cancer survivor — I was diagnosed in 2012. It really opened my eyes to how short life really is. I learned how to be an even bigger fighter and find true happiness. I've worked hard to get where I am today. I am truly grateful for the people in my life, and that I have been given a great opportunity to run a business my grandparents started in 1954.

What are some of your hobbies outside of work? I have been an avid horseback rider all my life. I'm a reining cow horse performance rider and compete at the nonprofessional level. My horse and I won a Championship Title (Top 10) in Fort Worth, Texas, in 2019 in the Sk Non Pro Limited Class. Horses are my passion; they are such beautiful animals with a beautiful spirit. Being with them gives me such serenity and peace. On the competitive level, I love the adrenaline and connection I have with my horse. We are quite the team together!

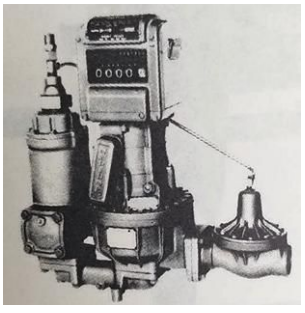
What advice do you have for someone coming into the industry? Work hard and follow what you want in life. Have a good support system. Manage wisely. Business isn't easy, but if you stay focused and treat your staff and customers well, you will have developed a successful business.

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