BUTANE-PROPANE NEWS

BPN

JULY 22



Joe Roggio,
Area Manager at Paraco Gas

Reframe Your Perspective on the People Problem

Revise & replace routine recruiting & retention processes to alleviate labor challenges

Record Prices & Materials Shortages Leave Global Supply Chain in Fragile State

Event Coverage: NPGA's 2022 Propane Days

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Dear Readers,

Staffing, succession planning, internal communications, workflow efficiencies and customer experience — it's not just your company that is challenged by these facets of business. Maybe they're not a challenge for you currently, but I would bet money that keeping them top of mind is always a priority.

These obstacles are not specific to propane; our parent company, Cahaba Media Group, owns six brands in six different industries, and these are topics regularly covered in all six publications. And at a management retreat this week, our own team spent a large portion of its time working to improve the Cahaba Media strategy for navigating these challenges.

In a recent poll from the Pew Research Center regarding the Great Resignation, surveyors were asked their main reasons for quitting a job in 2021. Top answers from respondents included "pay was too low," "no opportunities for advancement" and "felt disrespected at work."

Bottom line: We can lament all we want about the lack of qualified workers, regulations that make the staffing process more difficult and an ever-increasing "competitive pay," but you don't have much control over most of that. What can you control? How your business responds. Some initiatives will require investment. Some initiatives only require a little sweat equity. And some just require a change in mindset.

Our feature series this month is focused on your most valuable asset: your employees. From advice for understanding and managing stress within the workplace to how one propane retailer changed its approach to hiring and why it helped, we hope you find something in our employees feature series that helps you moving forward in recruiting and retention for your team. Turn to page 24 to get started.

At the end of the day, all of the other challenges listed above cannot be helped if you don't help your workforce first. Happy, engaged employees want to stick around; they will drive positive, transparent communication; they work efficiently; and they are more focused on providing the best customer experience possible. Start with fixing any people problems you're contending with, and you may be surprised by what you'll find.

In the meantime, BPN will be strategizing for 2023 content and how to improve your experience with our brand. We'd love to hear your thoughts — email us at bpneditorial@cahabamedia.com.

Thanks for reading!



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BUTANE-PROPANE NEWS

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EDP Expands Footprint East

Energy Distribution Partners has expanded its footprint further into the East following the acquisition of Liberty Propane and Meadows Petroleum.

With the recent acquisition, EDP has extended its customer base into Delaware, New Jersey and Virginia.





"We are confident EDP is the right propane retailer to take good care of our employees while providing safe, reliable service to our customers."
Former owners Kevin Meadows and Matt McGuigan



For a confidential conversation about your high-quality propane operation, contact David Stroupe, 312.254.5954 or dstroupe@edplp.net

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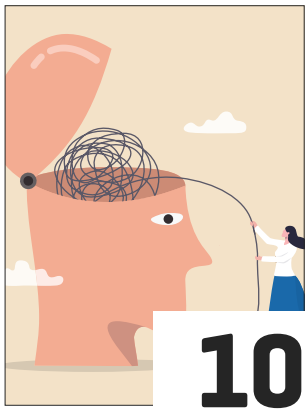
July 2022



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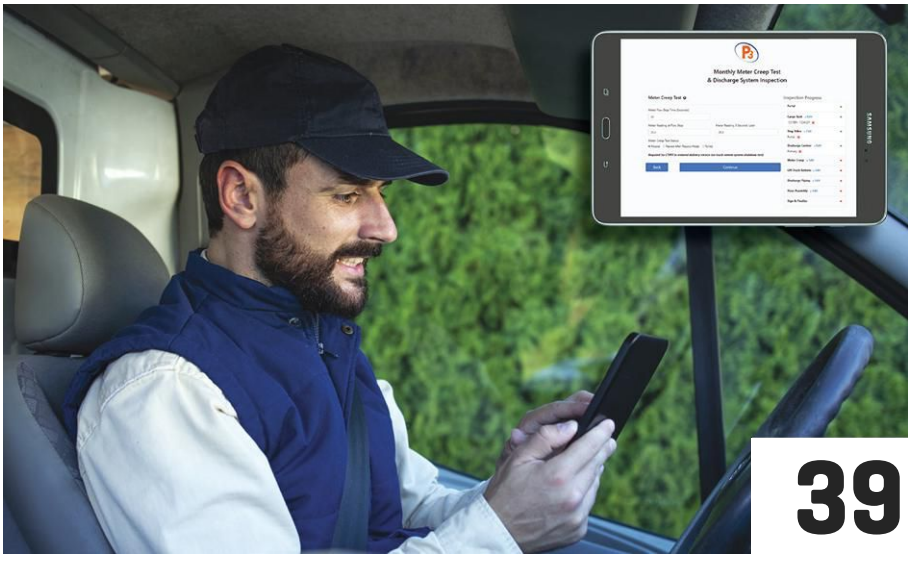

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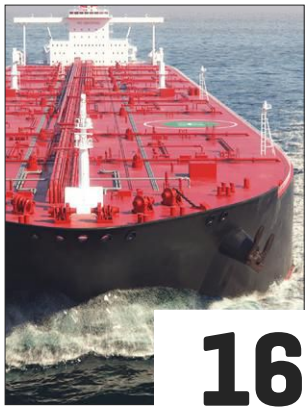

16

Feature Series
Employees

24 Managing Stress in the Propane Workplace
A health care professional's advice for reducing stressors & creating a healthier work environment

28 Navigating Positive Workplace Politics With Your Manager
4 questions to consider & 3 steadfast rules for building trust & camaraderie

30 Replace Routine Hiring & Promoting Processes With Nontraditional Hires
How a road less taken can lead to fantastic employees

32 How the Propane Industry Can Stand Out to the Next Generation of Job Seekers
One workforce development leader outlines what the industry has to offer prospective employees



24



22

6 Marketplace

8 News & Events

10 Verbatim
Propane leaders answer: How do you manage stress?

14 Propane & the Law
Defense attacks multimillion-dollar grill explosion verdict

16 Beyond the Mains
Have we finished writing the supply chain history books?

18 Finance
It's crunch time: Execute efficiently to protect your margin

20 Strategy
Fighting back to save our industry — a New York story

22 Event Coverage
NPGA's summer board meeting & annual Propane Days

34 BPN 2022 Product Showcase
Newest propane products & services

37 Public Policy
New York's Emergency Fill Bill & its potential repercussions for the propane industry

39 Safety
4 ways mobile driver documentation can save you time & money

42 Advertiser Index

48 Industry Insider



On the Cover
Paraco's Joe Roggio embodies the benefits of the marketer's nontraditional hiring practices.

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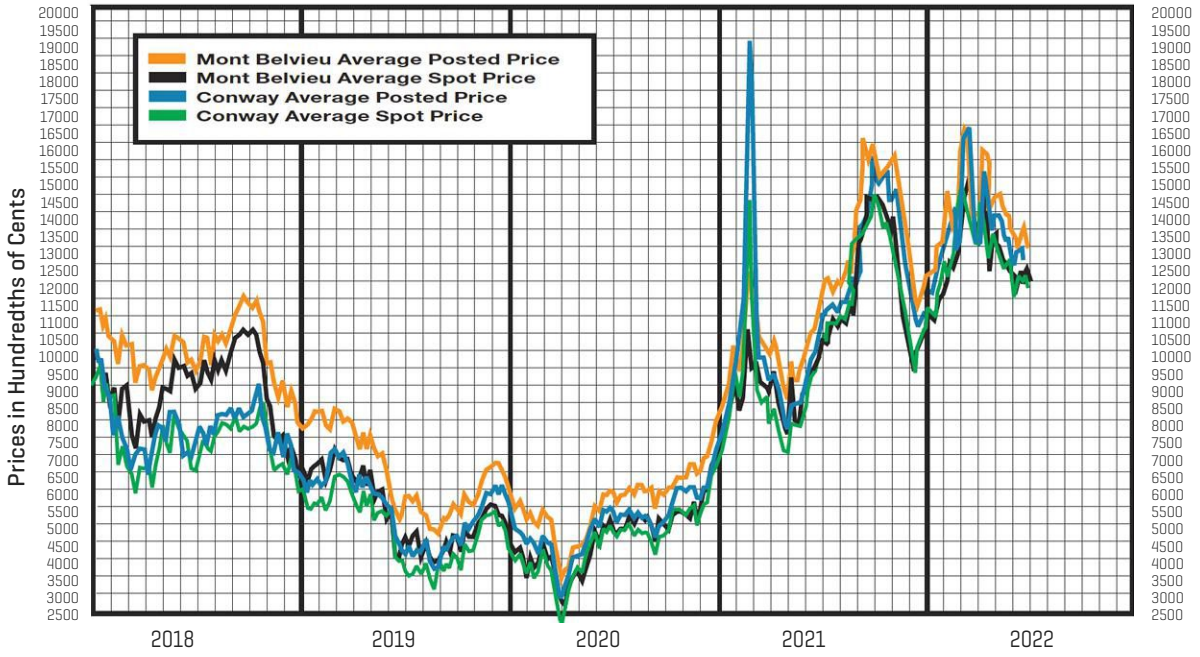
MONT BELVIEU & CONWAY AVERAGE THURSDAY PROPANE PRICES



at a glance: During the latest May to June mid-month period, Mont Belvieu, Texas, posted prices decreased 2.667 cents/gal., and the spot prices climbed 3.625 cents. Conway, Kansas, postings ended with a 2.95-cent decrease and spots rose 2 cents over the month.

MID-WEEK AVERAGE POSTED/SPOT PROPANE PRICES (Cents per Gallon)

	5/19/22	5/26/22	6/2/22	6/9/22	6/16/22
Mont Belvieu					
posted	132.006	129.589	134.089	136.172	129.339
spot	116.250 – 119.250	123.250 – 126.500	119.250 – 122.750	124.000 – 124.375	119.875 – 121.000
Conway					
posted	125.248	123.898	127.498	129.448	122.298
spot	115.500 – 117.500	121.250 – 123.750	120.000 – 121.000	121.250 – 123.000	117.500 – 118.500

at a glance

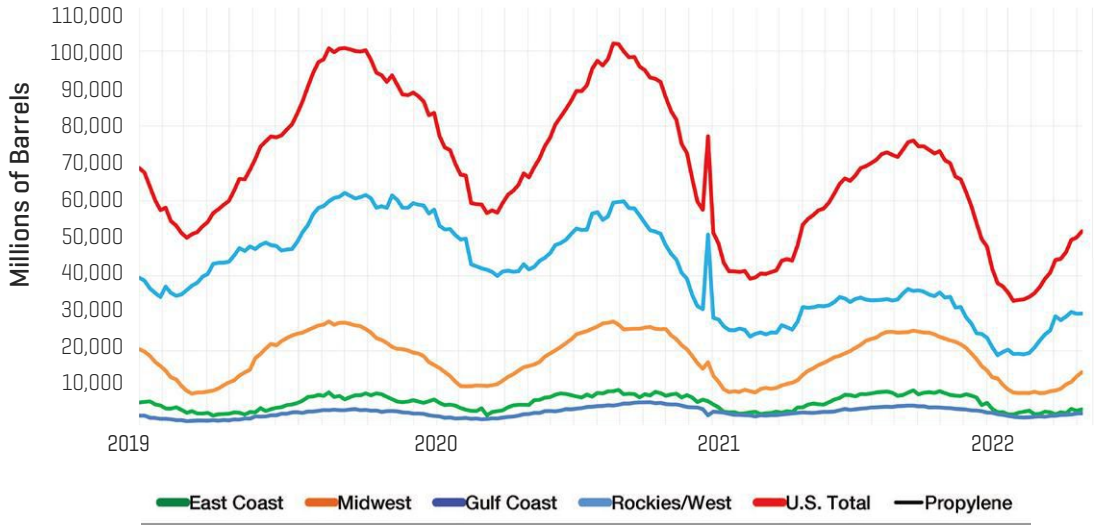
Canada's primary underground propane inventories increased by 60.33% in June, according to the Canada Energy Regulator. The total represented a month-to-month increase of 336.4 Mcm. Compared to a year earlier, stocks were lower, with 225.5 Mcm (20.14%) less product on hand.

CANADIAN INVENTORIES (Thousand Cubic Meters)

PROPANE	May 2022	June 2022	Change	June 2021
Propane-East	119.9	266.6	122.4%	490.4
Propane-West	437.6	627.4	43.4%	629.1
Total Propane	557.6	894.0	60.3%	1119.5
BUTANE				
Butane-East	141.9	243.7	71.7%	296.8
Butane-West	437.7	473.5	8.2%	549.3
Total Butane	579.6	717.2	23.7%	846.0

Source: Canada Energy Regulator

U.S. PROPANE INVENTORIES



U.S. PROPANE INVENTORIES

May 13, 2022 - June 10, 2022, and One Year Ago (Thousand Barrels)

	6/10/22	6/3/22	5/27/22	5/20/22	5/13/22	6/11/21
East Coast	4.354	3.962	4.502	3.335	3.609	5.620
Midwest	14.270	13.124	11.686	10.984	9.869	14.655
Gulf Coast	29.916	29.909	30.356	29.103	28.155	31.448
Rocky Mtn & West Coast	3.280	3.238	3.028	2.911	2.884	3.471
U.S.	51.821	50.233	49.572	46.333	44.517	55.194

at a glance

United States propane stocks experienced a 7.304-MMbbl increase from May to June. East Coast stocks rose 745,000 bbl, the Midwest climbed 4.401 MMbbl, the Gulf Coast increased 1.761 MMbbl and the Rocky Mountain/West Coast inched up 396,000 bbl. Compared to the same time in June 2021, the June 2022 stocks were 3.373 MMbbl lower.

Editor's Note: *From April to the beginning of October, the Energy Information Administration does not report residential prices for propane. Publication of this data will resume with the October 2022 issue.*

Find out more:
For further commentary on mid-month prices and Canadian inventories, visit bpnews.com/news.

MICHELLE BIMSON MAGGI APPOINTED NPGA CHAIR


Michelle Bimson Maggi

Michelle Bimson Maggi, vice president (VP) of law — AmeriGas, has been appointed the first woman to chair the National Propane Gas Association (NPGA). "I am honored to have been selected as chair of NPGA," said Bimson Maggi. "I look forward to working closely with the NPGA leadership team and our 2,400 members to expand NPGA's advocacy, education, and diversity and inclusion efforts. The propane industry … can use our collective voice to convey to the public important messages about the benefits of propane — and to advocate for how propane companies make positive contributions to the environment." As AmeriGas' VP of law, Bimson Maggi advises the company on legal, risk management, industry and political matters. She has held positions of increasing responsibility in the UGI Corporation/AmeriGas law departments since 2007, including associate counsel, counsel, senior counsel and group counsel. She is a founding member and a current leader of UGI's Women's Impact Network (WIN) employee resource group. "Michelle is a modern leader and the perfect fit to chair NPGA," said Stephen Kaminski, president and CEO of NPGA. "She's a strategic thinker, a champion for propane and an ardent advocate for driving the industry forward. I am excited to work [together] with her."

EIA EXPECTS INCREASED US CRUDE OIL PRODUCTION, CONTINUED HIGH PETROLEUM PRICES IN 2022

The United States Energy Information Administration (EIA) forecasts that U.S. crude oil production will average 11.9 million barrels per day this year and 12.8 million barrels per day in 2023, which would surpass the record average production of 12.3 million barrels per day set in 2019. Despite the increases in production, EIA expects the Brent crude oil price to remain above $100 per barrel this year. EIA also published its annual Summer Electricity Industry Outlook, which forecasts that continued U.S. economic growth will increase electricity use by 0.4% in the U.S. this summer (June–August) compared with the summer of 2021. EIA forecasts that retail sales of electricity to the industrial sector will grow by 2.8% and by 1.5% in the commercial sector. EIA expects that U.S. households will use 2.9% less electricity this summer compared with last, largely because of weather forecasts for a cooler summer this year. Higher electricity prices mean that the average U.S. household will pay about the same amount for electricity this summer as last summer.

CHESAPEAKE UTILITIES CORPORATION ANNOUNCES NEW DIVERSITY OFFICER


Sharon Grant

Chesapeake Utilities Corporation announced that Sharon Grant joined the company as assistant vice president and diversity officer, effective June 6. Grant will oversee Chesapeake Utilities' equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) strategy and initiatives, including its EDI Council and employee resource groups, while also collaborating across the organization with the teams responsible for the enterprise-wide environmental, social and governance plan. Grant will also lead efforts to improve the employee experience, with a focus on employee engagement and enhancing company culture to foster an environment that promotes wellness, inclusion and belonging. Grant most recently held the role of vice president and chief diversity officer at the Virginia Economic Development Partnership in Richmond, Virginia.

CANADIAN INVENTORIES INCREASE FROM MAY TO JUNE 2022

Canada's primary underground propane inventories increased by 60.33% in June, according to the Canada Energy Regulator. The total represented a month-to-month increase of 336.4 Mcm. Compared to a year earlier, stocks were lower, with 225.5 Mcm, or 20.14%, less product on hand. Propane storages in the West started June a bit higher at 627.4 Mcm, which corresponds to 3.953 MMbbl, the agency reported. From May to June, volumes increased by 189.8 Mcm, or 43.37%, and were 1.70 less the year prior's level of 629.1 Mcm. Propane storages in the East started June higher at 266.6, commensurate with 1.67958 MMbbl. This gain put propane 146.7 Mcm, or 122.35%, higher for the month, with a decrease of 223.8, or 45.64%, below a year earlier. Canadian butane inventories stood at 717.2 Mcm at the beginning of June, for an increase of 137.6 Mcm, or 23.74%, from May. Like propane, the year-over-year comparison finds butane volumes to be lower than the prior year's total, with inventories 128.8 Mcm, or 15.22%, below 2020. Western butane supplies, at 473.5 Mcm, were higher by 35.8 Mcm, or 8.18%, from the previous months and were 75.8 Mcm, or 13.80%, less than last year. Eastern butane, at 243.7 Mcm, was 101.8 Mcm, or 71.74%, higher month over month, and totaled 53.1 Mcm, or 17.89%, below a year earlier.

ADD SYSTEMS REMEMBERS VP OF ADD SOUTH & FUEL INDUSTRY VETERAN MARK COLLINS


Mark Collins

Advanced Digital Data Inc. shared the news of the passing of Mark Collins, ADD Systems' vice president of ADD South. After more than 35 years, he made an indelible mark on ADD's products, team members and clients. The team is grateful for his years of service, expertise and friendship. Not long after graduating college, Collins joined Independent Computer Consultants (ICC), where he gained experience in the heating oil, burner service and welding supply industries. In 1987, he brought his expertise to Petroleum Software Systems (PSS). There, he was responsible for the design, installation and support of their ERP software solution for diversified petroleum distributors. When PSS was sold to Electronic Data Systems (EDS) in 1994, he took on the role of operations and product manager and was responsible for downstream petroleum distribution

solutions. He worked on several large projects with clients in the U.S. and abroad. In 1999, EDS sold their petroleum software division to ADD Systems. Collins was instrumental in the acquisition and worked with ADD founder, Bruce A. Bott, to create a smooth transition for his team and clients. Collins took on the role of VP of ADD South, where he continued to passionately develop software and oversee the Orlando, Florida, office.

FABIAN OIL INC. ACQUIRES SPRING BROOK ICE & FUEL CO.

Fabian Oil Inc. of Oakland, Maine, has acquired the heating oil, propane and service business of Spring Brook Ice & Fuel Co., in Waterville, Maine. The transaction closed on June 1. Spring Brook Ice & Fuel was founded in 1918 after World War I. During a century of service, Spring Brook supplied ice and coal into the 1950s, when heating and range oil became the fuels of choice. Fuel storage and propane delivery were later added along with service. Robert L. Ervin founded and grew the business and was known as a generous businessman and community leader. The family business was passed down over the years to his son, Edmund N. Ervin, in 1962 and his grandsons, Edmund D. Ervin and Robert Ervin in 2009. Fabian Oil was founded in 1988 as a single retail gasoline station. By 1991, Fabian Oil was retailing heating oil to the Central Maine area. Family-owned and -operated Fabian Oil has expanded its product mix to include propane, service and natural gas, and added multiple retail locations throughout Maine. Cetane Associates served as the sole arranger and financial advisor to Spring Brook Ice & Fuel Co.

DITECH TESTING NAMES NEW PRESIDENT

Ditech Testing announced the appointment of its new president, Jacques Lirette. After more than 30 years delivering business results in the healthcare and technology industries, Lirette is ready to forge and maintain productive relationships with Ditech's clients, key stakeholders and team members. He is also committed to developing sales and marketing opportunities for the company that will help expand client reach and provide excellent service. Lirette is an expert on IT strategy development, technology transformation, productivity enhancement and revenue optimization — and these areas have been substantial for Ditech's growth in recent years.

SUPERIOR PLUS ACQUIRES QUARLES DELIVERED FUELS BUSINESS

Superior Plus Corp. announced it has acquired the retail propane and refined fuels distribution assets of Quarles Petroleum Inc. The US$144 million purchase price was paid with funds drawn from Superior's existing credit facility. Founded in 1940, the Quarles Delivered Fuels Business is an established retail propane distributor servicing approximately 55,000 residential and commercial customers primarily in Virginia. Quarles has 29 propane bulk plants, one rail terminal, approximately 3 million gallons of storage capacity, a fleet of 196 vehicles and 188 employees. On a normalized basis, including the achievement of expected synergies and weather consistent with the five-year average, Superior expects Quarles to generate approximately US$19 million (CA$24 million) in adjusted EBITDA on an annual run-rate basis 24 months following the close of the acquisition.

FERRELLGAS JOINS NPGA

Ferrellgas Partners L.P. announced that it is joining the NPGA. The trade organization represents approximately 2,400 companies in the U.S. propane industry. "We are excited to help support the great work the NPGA is doing to promote the awareness of and availability of green, accessible, affordable and efficient propane," said Ferrellgas Chief Operating Officer Tamria Zertuche. As Ferrellgas' membership begins, several employee-owners will be joining the NPGA's committees and councils, including the Audit, Governmental Affairs, PropanePAC Steering, Propane Supply & Logistics, and Technology, Standards & Safety Committees.

Industry Calendar

July 8 Oklahoma Propane Gas Association Board Meeting
okpropane.org
Oklahoma City, OK

July 10-13 Virginia Propane Gas Association Summer Meeting
vapga.org
Virginia Beach, VA

July 11-14 Kentucky Propane Gas Association Annual Meeting & Convention
kygas.org
French Lick, IN

July 14-15 2022 Summer Benchmarking Council Meeting
npga.org
Baltimore, MD

July 19-20 PERC Council Meeting
propane.com
Lake Geneva, WI

July 19-21 Minnesota Propane Association Convention & Trade Show
discoverpropanemn.com
Duluth, MN

July 25-26 PERC Train the Trainer
propane.com
Tampa, FL

July 26-28 Great Lakes Propane Convention
ohiopropanegas.org
Grand Rapids, MI

July 26-28 Alabama/Louisiana Summer Convention
alabamapropane.com
Orange Beach, AL

July 27-29 Mid-States Management Forum
npga.org
Olathe, KS

July 28-31 Florida Propane Gas Association Annual Convention
floridapropane.org
Bonita Springs, FL

August 3 Propane Marketers Association of Kansas
pmak.org
Topeka, KS

FOR ADDITIONAL CALENDAR ITEMS, VISIT BPNEWS.COM.



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

HOW DO YOU MANAGE STRESS?

Learn how your propane colleagues employ their own tactics to combat stress

Since I was behind on my deadline and needed to hurriedly develop a question and request replies on a tight due date, the topic of stress could not be more apropos this month. It turns out that our colleagues have some keen insights from their own lived experiences, which they share here.

In this column, adopted from the familiar "Heard on the Street" format, we offer our responders a chance to answer the question posed in the title. These are their replies reported verbatim.

STRESS RELIEF IN THE EAST

Managing stress is so important to our health. Exercise has always helped me, even if it is a quick walk or sitting and taking a breath. My favorite way to relieve stress is to go outside, look at nature, observe this wonderful earth and ask myself, 'Will this matter six months from now?' I also have faith that everything works out.

LAURIE IRISH-JONES
IRISH PROPANE
BUFFALO, NEW YORK

PRAY.

JUDY TARANOVICH
PROCTOR GAS
PROCTOR, VERMONT

When I read the question, "How do you handle stress?" my first thought was, "Probably not as well as I should."

Then I thought, we can't all handle stress like they do in a Hallmark movie. I've heard the ways that we should handle stress. Step back, take a breath and pray on it. I'm a work in progress on that. The way that I handle stress is to usually run the scenario past my wife. She is the calming influence for my mini meltdowns. It is amazing how a calming voice can alleviate a stressful situation.

JON SHEPARD
VK INSPECTIONS LLC
MERCER, PENNSYLVANIA

Since stress is an unavoidable part of life, I believe that finding healthy ways to manage it is imperative. Stress can present itself in many forms; however, being intentional on how you cope with it can make all the difference in improving your life.

What works for me is taking a long walk or having a conversation with a friend. I also like to do yoga every chance I get! I learned the hard way that if you do not manage stress in healthy ways (or at all), then other parts of your life will inevitably suffer.

JESSICA JOHNSON
THOMPSONGAS
ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

STRESS RELIEF IN THE MID-STATES

Based on my blood pressure, I probably don't manage it very well! But I do try to keep it under control, and I've found that exercise and more frequent vacations are some good ways to reduce stress.

JASON SOULON
WESTMOR INDUSTRIES
SHAWNEE, KANSAS

For me, stress comes from trying to do it all. Years of failure to accomplish "all of it" has led me to better prioritizing my

> The important things in life are not the deadlines that we need to meet, but families, friendships, laughter, health & peace.



days (I loved the book "The One Thing"). If I'm saying yes to you, it means that I'm saying no to someone or something else and I have learned to be OK with that. But if none of those things work, I love a ride in our Jeep. Somehow those always seem to end up involving ice cream, and we all know that ice cream fixes anything!

TONYA CROW
GROWMARK, INC.
BLOOMINGTON, ILLINOIS

If the stress is work related, I try to "turn off" at the end of the day and just do something different. Physical activity is always good, as is playing music or just spending time with Karen, my wife. If the stress is coming from another area, often I can get lost in my work, as well as the other things I mentioned. If the stress is coming from an interpersonal relationship, I'll try to resolve things quickly and move on.

BRUCE SWIECICKI
NATIONAL PROPANE GAS ASSOCIATION
TINLEY PARK, ILLINOIS

How do I handle it? When I was young, I cried. Ugh, I hated that. It just happened — not often, but when the stress hit its peak, yes, I'm sad to say I cried. But then I felt better and picked up the pieces and got it done! As I got older, I came to the realization that whatever I was stressed out about might not have been as important as I was making it out to be. Approximately eight years ago, my husband died at age 57 to a rare form of cancer. That played a huge role in how I handled stress. Suddenly those things that caused stress no longer seemed as stressful. There is perspective in losing a loved one.

The important things in life are not the deadlines that we need to meet, but instead the important items are families, friendships, laughter, health and peace. I realized that in our jobs [at Rural Computer Consultants], no one is going to die if we make a mistake.

We are not doctors where lives depend on us. If we make a mistake, we own up to it and we fix it. I still strive to meet deadlines so people can trust my word. My work life has changed somewhat to allow that to happen. In the realization of the important things in life, the more capable I feel of letting much of that stress go!

SUSAN PETERSON
RURAL COMPUTER CONSULTANTS
BIRD ISLAND, MINNESOTA

Stress is usually caused by an unforeseen challenge or feeling overwhelmed. If the stressor is sudden and unexpected, I assemble everyone who needs to be involved and tackle the issue as a team. We identify the problem, what actionable items can be addressed and assign a responsible party and a follow-up plan.

If I'm overwhelmed, it's a sign that I need to get organized, so I manage it by regrouping. I make a list (sometimes breaking it into several lists of what is manageable in a given day), I delegate what I can and then I get to work, and continually reevaluate if I'm properly managing my expectations of myself and others so that the stress doesn't build back up.

LAUREN CLARK
BERGQUIST
TOLEDO, OHIO

When I feel an excessive amount of stress, I try to get some free time on the schedule if I can. I'll take a break and remind myself that whatever is bringing the stress is more my response to it than the situation itself.

BOYD H. MCGATHEY
ENERGY DISTRIBUTION PARTNERS
PARKVILLE, MISSOURI

Managing my stress is hardest when I feel completely overwhelmed. I have to remind myself that I can only do so many things in a day. What helps me most is to make a list of all the tasks I need to accomplish, and then prioritize which are the most important. If I need to get

an earlier start to my day or put in some extra time at the end of my day, I will do that. Once I begin to check items off my list, I feel so much better!

ROSIE BUSCHUR
MCMAHAN'S BOTTLE GAS
DAYTON, OHIO

STRESS RELIEF IN THE WEST

Balance. I must balance out my days, weeks and years. It is up to me to say yes or no to those things I put on my calendar. Along with work, I have to intentionally schedule in exercise, time with family, play, etc.

Stress is real. [I manage] my life [by only allowing] in it the stress that I have to handle and keep at bay the stress that is not under my control; for example, I cannot manage news, fake news or other people's drama. Sometimes it is hard to know the difference, and that's when I turn to the Serenity Prayer: "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference."

JULIE JOHNSON
TED JOHNSON PROPANE
BALDWIN PARK, CALIFORNIA

Most of my stress comes from my own procrastination. You would think at my age that I would know that I should only handle papers one time and start a project and ignore all distractions until the project is finished. There are so many things that are more fun or interesting than this project, so I allow them to take up my time.

It's just like when Nancy sends out these questions with such a short response time. She is smart enough to know that given any more time, most of us would put off our responses and then let other papers or emails pile on top of hers so it would get lost. Thanks, Nancy, for the short lead time and the reminder that life is less stressful when we handle it once and get it done.

CHUCK KINNIE
SHASTA GAS PROPANE
SHASTA, CALIFORNIA

OOOOMMMMMMM

After more than two years of a pandemic, we have all learned a thing or two about managing the stress that accompanies the unknown, the over-worked and the human experience.

In the spiritual world, the Om symbol represents a sacred sound that is known generally as the sound of the universe. Om is all encompassing, the essence of ultimate reality; it unifies everything in the universe. Seems we humans have lately not had our full dosage of om.

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

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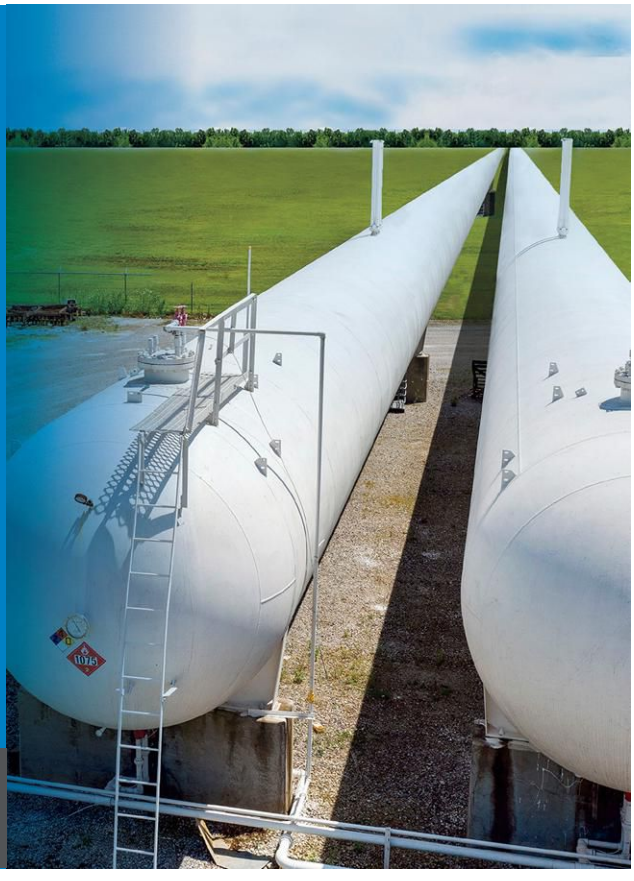

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David Schlee is of counsel to the firm of Baty Otto Coronado Scheer P.C., with offices in Kansas City, St. Louis and Springfield, Missouri. He may be reached at dschlee@batyotto.com. Visit batyotto.com.

DEFENSE ATTACKS MULTIMILLION-DOLLAR GRILL EXPLOSION VERDICT

Cylinder supplier files motion to vacate judgment holding it accountable for defective cylinder valve

Editor's Note: As this issue went to print, the court had still not come to a definitive ruling on this case.

Recently, a jury returned a large verdict in favor of a man who sustained second-degree burn injuries in a propane grill flash fire incident. The retail propane distributor that supplied the 20-pound grill cylinder has asked the trial court to reverse and vacate the verdict.

CYLINDER EXCHANGE

The plaintiff purchased a three-burner grill at a local hardware store. He connected a filled 20-pound propane cylinder to the grill, and for the next four months, the grill was apparently used without incident.

The plaintiff then exchanged the original propane cylinder for a replacement cylinder under a standard cylinder exchange program. According to his subsequent lawsuit, the plaintiff connected the cylinder to the grill and lit the burners to cook a meal. After some time had passed, he checked the progress of the cooking. He said that he observed that the flame was low or out and that the grill was not heating up properly.

CHECKING THE CONNECTION

The plaintiff claimed that he decided to check the connection between the tank and the grill, but when he opened the lower cabinet of the grill, there was a flash fire that caused second-degree burns on his face, arms, hands and abdomen.

The defense claimed that he failed to follow the warnings on the cylinder and in the instruction manual. Specifically, it claimed that he left the burner on before inspecting the tank connection, didn't tighten the connection properly, used the cylinder out of its proper position and manipulated the connection while gas was flowing.

The plaintiff and his wife sued the grill manufacturer and the supplier of the cylinder. He claimed residual nerve damage in his hands, with resulting pain and numbness. He alleged that he could not garden or golf as often as before the incident.

He also said that he now has anxiety when he is near propane or fire. His wife claimed loss of consortium. The plaintiffs subsequently entered into a confidential settlement with the grill manufacturer, and the case went to trial against the cylinder supplier.

DEFECTIVE VALVE?

Initially, the plaintiffs asserted that the cylinder valve was 17 years old and too worn to achieve a tight connection. They added that, in their opinion, the cylinder was not properly inspected before it was provided to the plaintiff. The defense responded that it inspected the cylinder and the valve outlet, which were in proper condition when the cylinder was delivered. It added that its inspection was in accordance with NFPA 58.

By the time of trial, the plaintiffs had enlisted two expert witnesses to attack the condition of the cylinder. Based on post-incident examination almost a year after the incident, they determined that the connection between the valve outlet and the hose to the grill burners was not closing properly and that this was the source of the leaking gas that ignited and caused the plaintiff's injuries.

This, according to the plaintiffs' counsel, rendered the cylinder defective and unreasonably dangerous, exposing the defendant to strict product liability for the damages sustained by the plaintiffs.

ALTERNATIVE CAUSES

The defense conceded that the valve was



in defective condition at the time of the post-incident inspection, but it argued that this did not mean the cylinder was defective at the time of the incident or at the time the cylinder left the possession of the defendant. In fact, the damage to the valve could have been caused by the intense heat of the incident itself.

In addition, the defense argued that there was a plausible alternative cause of the cylinder leak that the plaintiffs' experts could not rule out. A loose connection between the valve and the regulator hose could have been combined with a sufficient side load (plaintiff could not recall whether he manipulated the cylinder while checking the connection) to cause the leak, even if the valve was not in defective condition.

VERDICT & MOTION

The jury returned a verdict against the cylinder supplier. It awarded substantial damages, and the defendant filed a motion to vacate the judgment. It asked that the court either enter judgment in its favor or at least order a new trial.

On the product liability claim, it was the burden of the plaintiffs to prove that the cylinder valve was in defective condition at the time it left the possession of the supplier. The defense argued that the fact that it was in defective condition almost a year later is insufficient to meet this burden, since the plaintiffs' experts could not eliminate the possibility that the incident itself — or some other intervening cause — resulted in the condition of the valve. In addition, the experts could not rule out negligence by the plaintiff himself in not properly tightening the connection and manipulating the cylinder to cause a side load on the fitting.

'GOOD IDEA?'

The plaintiffs had also claimed that the supplier was negligent in inspecting the cylinder prior to its delivery. However, no evidence was offered to show that the inspection by the supplier did not meet the industry standard of care.

One expert did offer that it would be a "good idea" to test every valve under regulated pressure on every cylinder exchange. This, argued the defense, was insufficient to establish that there was indeed an industry standard of care or practice to make such a test.

Additionally, the defense pointed to repeated violations of court stipulations and orders by the plaintiffs' attorney in making inflammatory arguments to the jury. This, at a minimum, resulted in an excessive verdict and an unbalanced allocation of fault between plaintiff and defendant.

Finally, the defense invoked the court's authority to reduce the damage award to a reasonable amount, since it was far in excess of the injuries actually sustained by the plaintiffs.

The court had still not ruled on the defense motion at the time of the writing of this article in early June.



Robert Kenney is the managing director of Metsa Tanks, where he has worked for six years, and an active participant in the National Propane Gas Association, serving on the board of directors of the manufacturing section. He lives in Monterrey, Mexico, where he is a vocal advocate for cooperative trade between the U.S., Mexico and Central America as a driver for value creation, development and regional stability. Visit metsa.com.

HAVE WE FINISHED WRITING THE SUPPLY CHAIN HISTORY BOOKS?

With record prices & material shortages, the global supply chain is left in a fragile state

We live in a time of hyperbole, where every week we are forced to discuss historic and unprecedented events in the world, ranging from the ongoing health crisis to various economic indicators and sociopolitical conflicts.

These factors have contributed directly to an extremely damaged global supply chain, resulting in record fuel and commodity prices, material shortages and plant stoppages. Current events have exposed how delicate our globalized supply chain truly is and the extreme risk we have exposed ourselves to in the name of globalization.

Just as we as consumers and business owners began to see relief on the horizon in the form of material availability and cost reduction — especially in the steel industry, which months before had broken the previously unfathomable $2,000 a ton hot rolled coil — Russian forces began a military campaign in Ukraine, which turned back all progress that had been made to that point. What exactly happened that was able to spook the global industrial supply chain?

As we all learned during our 15 minutes of becoming scholars in geopolitical conflict and consequences (myself included), Russia is a world leader in gas exports, supplying Europe with 40% of their imports, as well as being a large contributor to Asia and Africa. Russia and Ukraine are also among leaders in the manufacturing and commercialization of many metal-making raw materials, such as pig iron, coking coal and nickel (a key raw material for making stainless steel and brass).

Prices went through the roof, trading was restricted on many platforms and a general supply fear took over the narrative as inflation became the No. 1 talking point on the news. While these strains on business and the consumer have rightfully been the focal point of the non-humanitarian effects of the conflict, one thing not garnering as many of the highlights is the fragility of our global supply chain.

Just as we saw such a rapid expansion in the past 30 years in the globalization of large corporate supply chains, many have already begun the process of reshoring and modifying technology to not only become more self- or regionally sufficient, but also to maintain the pace of growing regulations from governments. Steelmakers over the past years have begun migrating from traditional blast furnaces to electric arc furnaces, where the primary raw material is scrap that for the most part is locally sourced. With this change, they no longer have to source certain minerals and pig iron that, for a large part, have fluctuated

> Policy has already impacted energy by disincentivizing investment in oil & gas exploration & development. These are not industries that are easily ramped up & cannot be viewed as an option for cost alleviation ... unless the conversation is to maintain them as a long-term solution.



in price and availability depending on transportation costs, lead times, industry activity and political goodwill toward the foreign provider.

Public policy is also playing a part in this shift from large and complex global supply chains to more local or regional ones. Gone are the days of finding loopholes in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), allowing for transformation to be sufficient in order to modify the origin of Asian or extra-regional materials into North American products.

The United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement introduced new provisions to control steel-made products to require them to be "melted and poured" in North America, independent of if they were to be transformed or not.

The government has since gone one step further in the Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act, requiring that the steel used be "melted and poured" within the U.S. Those seeking public funds for infrastructure projects will be heavily burdened with compliance documentation to fulfill these requirements. In other areas of the strained supply chain, Congress is working to provide subsidies for American companies looking to build chips within the country to aid the battered and bruised auto industry, which is constantly rewriting projections as the year progresses.

Another way in which we can project public policy forcing reshoring and trade compliance without the use of traditionally consumer-damaging tariffs is competitive manufacturing requirements that serve as quasi-protectionism hidden behind social and environmental politics.

Carbon taxes are primarily viewed as the future of international trade requirements, which will force companies looking toward the U.S. market to invest heavily in their process or face heavy penalties for non-compliance. The effectiveness of this initiative is yet to be seen, but it has sparked considerable investment among industrials inside the U.S. and in international partners, such as Mexico, in preparation.

These policies are also impacting national business as the conversation has focused on moving away from fossil fuels into an unfeasible electric future. Policy has already impacted energy by disincentivizing investment in oil and gas exploration and development. These are not industries that are easily ramped up and cannot be viewed as an option for cost alleviation along the supply chain unless the conversation is to maintain them as a long-term solution. Transportation costs will remain high in the foreseeable future.

These crises have brought back to the foreground many of the protectionist policies that had been installed during President Donald Trump's administration, of which we have seen significant backtracking in recent years (such as the removal of Section 232 steel tariffs on certain countries).

Where does that leave manufacturing, commodity business and the consumer going forward? In short, in a precarious situation. The inability of the global supply chain to cohesively work has put a strain on the market. Prices continue to rise without much relief, and as the global supply chain continues to falter, we shall continue to pass the previous benchmarks with ease.

Adding additional regulations into the equation, such as green requirements, will only further shortages. Just as hyperbole has become commonplace in our discussions, so must we recognize that we have not finished breaking records. History will once again be rewritten.



IT'S CRUNCH TIME: EXECUTE EFFICIENTLY TO PROTECT YOUR MARGIN

Thrive in the current market with smart, strategic business decisions

BY LARRY RICHMOND

It's early June as I write this. I think it's safe to say the world has shifted drastically, and so much of what we need to do is much more difficult for one reason or another.

Average hourly earnings continue to grow significantly, pushing our entire economy further and further into an inflationary three-headed monster. The historic inflation we are experiencing now is driving down real average hourly earnings.

What does this mean for workers at the end of the day? It means their purchasing power has decreased even though their wages have increased. Real disposable personal income has been volatile since 2020 and the increasing rate of high inflation is standing in the way of real income growth. Indicators like this are anything but good news.

"If you turn a blind eye to the world now, history will turn a blind eye to you later. Ignoring an issue makes you a tacit supporter of it." This quote about ignoring indicators, attributed to Stewart Stafford, is a more eloquent way of saying, "It's your ass if you do."

High market conditions are presenting significant challenges for fuel dealers and, as things "tighten up," fuel dealers must execute all aspects of their businesses with supreme precision to survive. The rules are changing as we speak. We have reached a unique crossroad with no margin for error, and utilizing technology to run the business more effectively is paramount. There isn't much choice in the matter. You are either all in or all out.

PICK A SIDE — YOUR SIDE

Some expenses associated with running your business are 50% to 100% higher than just 18 months ago. I'm sure someone will lay claim to predicting that we would be staring down the barrel of $6 a gallon for heating oil in early June.

Notwithstanding the optics of having to sell your product at 100% more than you did before, this has far-reaching implications and ripple effects for fuel dealers nationwide. The tenacity of our industry to continuously overcome adversity and its ability to continue servicing the public is a matter to record, and most admirable.

Millions of consumers around the country rely on fuel dealers for comfort and peace of mind, knowing we are there to help our communities no matter the challenges and obstacles standing in our way.

A CRISIS ON MULTIPLE FRONTS

It's coming at us from all sides, and make no mistake: this is a triathlon, not a marathon, meaning you have to be good at more than one thing. You need to be adept in multiple disciplines.

It reminds me of the Clint Eastwood movie "Heartbreak Ridge," where, as a



United States Marine near the end of his career, he says, "Improvise, adapt and overcome." If today's environment does not call for this, I don't know what does. You need to finetune your strategies across the board, but optimizing your payments strategy is critical and a top priority because your fees are directly tied to volume.

Customers facing rising prices find themselves having to change their purchasing decisions. They must modify their behavior, and so should you.

Higher prices tend to result in so-called "demand destruction." It forces consumers to consume less product because they simply cannot afford to buy it in typical quantities, or at all. In either case, they may stop or reduce consumption of Product A in favor of an alternative Product B, because the latter provides a solution at a lesser cost.

Even if behavior modification is short term, the effects are like ripples in a pond. Sooner or later, those ripples touch everything.

Higher prices also force some customers to defer purchases. For example, they buy only what they need right now, i.e., perhaps 100 gallons of fuel instead of "topping off" the tank that might take 200 or more gallons.

It's touching you right now. Consider the phrase, "You can run, but you can't hide." For heating oil, propane or gasoline retailers, the current state of fuel pricing hits home on several fronts.

The rising cost of goods is eating away at margins like we've never seen before. We struggle with how to mitigate the math associated with managing your replacement cost as prices climb. Of course, these compounded issues significantly impact the bottom line.

You and your customers are dealing with extreme and dramatic cost increases because of high retail fuel prices. The consumer is squeezed to afford the cost of filling their tanks. Retailer lines of credit are maxing out in many cases in order to keep supply on hand, and high retail fuel prices equate to greater processing expenses, all of which eat at your margin.

Every fuel dealer needs to be looking at its payment acceptance strategies and gravitate customers (and its company) to the friendliest, most cost-effective payment options for their respective bottom lines.

For reference, in March 2021, the Energy Information Administration reported that heating oil nationwide began flirting above and below $3 a gallon and settled at less than $3 a gallon in the last week of March. Using $3 a gallon, that customer transaction of $600 for 200 gallons of fuel equates to processing fees that amount to half of what they are today.

Consider that today, with heating oil prices high and climbing, a delivery of 200 gallons will cost the consumer $1,200 or more. Now, I hope you are sitting down when you read this: depending on which payment methods are offered and utilized by the consumer, that single transaction will cost you anywhere from $3 to $30. Yes, unwise payment decisions can cost 10 times as much, wreak havoc on your bottom line, eat up your well-earned profitability or in certain transactions, eat up all your profitability.

I've talked about this before, so you already know that using Visa credit translates to big fees that, one way or another, you or your customer must pay. I can't stress enough how important it is to work with a payment professional who can help you interpret this and support you in your efforts to maneuver the minefield of credit card processing interchange fees.

So, no matter how you cut it, then versus now, fuel dealers are currently paying 100% more in payment processing fees today than they were in March 2021. The massive increase in Visa credit fees over the past year only adds insult to injury, further compounding the cost fuel retailers are seeing and feeling.

The good news is, utilizing more debit (any card brand) and e-check/ACH will be a huge help. Leaning toward Mastercard and Discover credit cards is certainly more "friendly" for your company and your customers.

It's not a heavy lift and telling your customers about it puts you in a very positive light as cost reductions help you pass on better value to the customers.

It's a new world and only the strong will survive, but those paying attention and leveraging technology (and skills) will thrive by the capture of and essential cost savings to the bottom line.

Larry Richmond is a cashflow automation specialist and president of Richmond Financial Services (RFS). In 2005, he successfully lobbied MasterCard to reclassify home heating retailers into the lower risk utility processing category, resulting in billions of dollars of savings to the industry. To date, this important watershed accomplishment stands as the single-most significant advancement in fee reductions associated with electronic payments for the heating fuels industry. Richmond can be reached at 617-843-5700, ext. 200, or by email at larry@richmondfs.com. Visit richmondfs.com.



FIGHTING BACK TO SAVE OUR INDUSTRY — A NEW YORK STORY

The NYPGA & Warm Thoughts Communications strategy to reach voters & change mindsets in the wake of the 'electrify everything' movement



BY RICH GOLDBERG

In 2019, the New York Legislature quietly passed the most radical climate change legislation in the country — the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA). Then Governor Andrew Cuomo committed the state to extraordinary reductions in carbon emissions that would affect every aspect of life in New York. These included:

- An 85% reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050
- 100% zero-emission electricity by 2040
- 22 million tons of carbon reduction through energy efficiency and electrification

Conveniently, the law didn't specify how these changes would be achieved or how much they would cost. That would be left to a Climate Action Council (CAC), which would be given two years to evaluate options and put forth its "scoping plans."

The law did pack a hell of a punch, however. It empowers any citizen to sue the state if the goals are not met. This is the playbook we see not just in New York, but in multiple blue states.

OUR WORST FEARS REALIZED

Fast forward to December 2021. The CAC released three proposed "pathways" for public comment. Even though propane has always been one of the cleaner traditional fuels, it is marked for extinction, along with natural gas, heating oil and gasoline. Among other things, the plans would:

- Prohibit propane, natural gas and oil equipment in new homes starting 2024
- Prohibit replacement of propane, natural gas and oil equipment in existing homes starting in 2030
- Eliminate new gasoline vehicle sales in New York after 2035
- Attempt to rapidly transform the electric grid using strictly solar, wind, hydro and nuclear power
- Apply carbon taxes to create unprecedented subsidies to home and building owners to facilitate the switch to electric heat pumps and much more

REVERSE ENGINEERING

Bill Overbaugh, the executive director of the New York Propane Gas Association (NYPGA), characterizes the plans as reverse engineering on steroids. They started with the goals of the law and figured out ways it could happen regardless of the practical realities and costs of the plan. The plans assume a best-case scenario for technological breakthroughs and include little detailed analysis of cost. To make the cost and benefits equal out and avoid outcry, the council projected benefits, such as:

- $35 to $50 billion in health care savings because people are going to walk more
- $255 billion in savings because New York would avoid climate change costs even though New York accounts for less than one-half of 1% of global climate emissions
- The double counting of carbon reduction benefits using formulas that only New York State has used to calculate these benefits and costs
- $7 billion in savings from avoiding trip hazards, for example: when people add insulation or other energy-saving measures to their homes, they will then fix things that caused them to trip and go to the hospital

It may strike us as absurd, but no one is laughing. In fact, precious little scrutiny has been given to this 1,000-page document, especially among the political class that wants to please voters' thirst for climate action or the media that overwhelmingly supports it. Typical New Yorkers don't have a clue of what's in store for them. After a six-month public comment period (ending July 1), the plans will be finalized and submitted to the new governor for implementation and modification at the end of 2022.

MOBILIZING THE INDUSTRY TO FIGHT BACK

Faced with a "clear and present danger" to its future, NYPGA leadership decided that this battle could not be won by simply lobbying friendly legislators. Matt Meehan of Mirabito Energy, who was vice president (VP) of the NYPGA board and headed its marketing committee, said, "We didn't feel we had a choice. We were not going to go down without a fight. And I remain hopeful that sanity will prevail if we buy enough time."

The board looked at the "Smart Heat New Jersey" campaign that my firm (Warm Thoughts Communications) was running in neighboring New Jersey on behalf of the Fuel Merchants Association (FMA). New Jersey's governor, Phil Murphy, had announced a new "energy master plan" that included forced conversion of every home to heat pumps. FMA leadership decided to go all in with a statewide advertising campaign leading up to the 2021 elections.

FMA members built a war chest of $1.2 million — approximately half from member donations and half from their rainy day fund. The goal: alert the public to the true implications of the plan, generate thousands of letters to legislators and the governor advocating a broader path than electrification, and turn the master plan into a matter of debate, not a done deal.

Warm Thoughts put together videos, TV ads, social media and digital display ads that reached millions of people in the state. We characterized the mandate as a new heat tax. Many heating oil dealers engaged their customers to support the cause. We generated more than 14,000 letters in just five months. The heat pump mandate became a topic in the gubernatorial debate. Bipartisan legislation overwhelmingly passed in the Democratic-controlled Senate to pause the conversion mandate until a true accounting of the costs could occur (though it died in the Assembly). Governor Murphy won reelection after leading polls by double digits. While the fight is far from over, we clearly changed the political calculus around this issue.

INCORPORATING LESSONS FOR NY

In New York, the landscape, resources and objectives are somewhat different, but many of the same lessons apply. First, as in New Jersey, we realized this is not a fight propane can win alone; we are too small a percentage of the energy mix. We needed to make this a battle over "electrify everything" and attract natural gas, heating oil and wood-burning voters to the cause.

Our goal is to educate the public and activate a community of resistors who would voice their concerns loudly enough to open the ears of moderate Democratic officials. As in New Jersey, our voter polls showed that New Yorkers overwhelmingly supported the goal of reducing carbon emissions and transitioning to electricity. But they knew very little about the actual plans. Their support dropped dramatically when they were confronted by the potential for higher energy costs, increased power grid vulnerability, forced expensive conversion to heat pumps, carbon taxes, etc.

The NYPGA board formed a small steering committee called the CLCPA committee that I facilitated in the early months as we put together our game plan. Here were the key priorities:

1. Mitigate the worst possible outcomes by avoiding outright bans on propane and minimizing the impact of carbon taxes and equipment surcharges.
2. Broaden the pathway so that traditional fuels like propane, heating oil and natural gas — which are becoming increasingly renewable — can help reduce carbon emissions at a fraction of the cost and disruption of total electrification.

OUR STRATEGY

We charted a two-pronged strategy. On one hand, we would continue to promote the benefits of propane as part of a reduced carbon future, with Propane Education & Research Council funding and messaging playing a big role in that. It would be an important part of our lobbying effort. But we knew it would only matter if we changed the political calculus and opened Democratic ears so they would listen to our story. To that end, we would run a much larger, aggressive, fuel-neutral campaign aimed at slowing down the CLCPA electrification freight train. This depended on raising money from propane companies and associate members.

We needed to engage the public on a large scale, not just in propane country, but throughout the state. We needed their anger and worry to foreshadow the costs politicians would incur if they continued down this narrow electrify-everything path. Only then would they open up to us as part of the solution. We called the campaign Smarter NY Energy (smarternyenergy.org). Our hope was that we could attract other allies under that umbrella, but we were willing to go it alone if need be.

Find out the campaign results:
In next month's issue, we'll cover the results of this campaign so far and how the team is adapting its approach moving forward.

Rich Goldberg is president of Warm Thoughts Communications, a marketing firm serving hundreds of propane and heating oil companies and associations nationwide. He is a 30-year industry veteran and a highly regarded speaker. He can be reached at rgoldberg@warmthoughts.com. Visit warmthoughts.com.





NPGA'S SUMMER BOARD MEETING & ANNUAL PROPANE DAYS

From the first woman chair to fighting 'electrify everything,' here's what happened in June

BY JESSICA GRAHAM

The nation's capital hosted propane leaders from across the country as the National Propane Gas Association (NPGA) held its summer board meeting and annual Propane Days in Washington June 8-10. Board members converged on the city to hear industry updates, attend panel discussions and conduct board business, capping it off with the historic appointment of the first woman to chair the NPGA. The three-day event sharpened the industry's focus on the future of propane, from ensuring propane's viability as a clean-burning fuel through continued work with lawmakers and federal entities to ongoing efforts to lock in propane as a fuel of the present and future. What follows is an overview of the meeting.

NPGA'S FIRST WOMAN CHAIR

The board had much to celebrate as Michelle Bimson Maggi, vice president — law at AmeriGas, assumed her role as NPGA Chair on June 10. In her speech, she detailed her path to AmeriGas, where she is able to help mitigate problems before they reach litigation. She acknowledged that her tenure as chair comes at a trying time for the industry — and she's ready to forge ahead.

"The electrify everything movement has hijacked the national conversation on the future of energy, and each and every one of us has to … tell our story. The stakes have never been higher."

Bimson Maggi also acknowledged the difficulties in explaining renewable energy's role on the path to zero emissions, that it isn't easy to make clear to people that "propane — albeit a fossil fuel — helps decarbonize our climate." She challenged the industry to continue educating others on propane's merits.

"We cannot let the electrify everything movement continue to set the narrative. Each of us needs to … fight for our industry," she said. "One of my biggest takeaways from [the NPGA Southeast] Expo is that many people do want to speak up and get involved. We need to tap into that energy and encourage as much participation as possible."

In closing, Bimson Maggi spoke about her historic appointment. "I'm very proud to be the first female chairman of NPGA. I know that all women and minorities in our industry see me and think to themselves, 'I can do that and step up to volunteer for other leadership positions because our industry meets people from all different backgrounds, professions and capabilities to meet the challenges we have before us.' Diverse thoughts and experiences will help us solve the problems we must solve if we want our industry to prosper."

In his address, NPGA President and CEO Stephen Kaminski invoked the concept of the glass ceiling when he told Bimson Maggi, "I hope you're wearing shoes under the [officers'] table, because there is glass everywhere."

Along with Bimson Maggi, her fellow NPGA officers were sworn in for the 2022-2023 term. Jeff Stewart of Blue Star Gas will serve as chair elect; Tom Van Buren of Meritum Energy Holdings will fill the role of vice chair; and Mike Hopsicker of Ray Murray Inc. will serve as treasurer.

The board also celebrated Robert Barry's service as NPGA chair over the past year. Barry was presented with a plaque and gavel to commemorate his

time as chair. An honorary scholarship was also named in honor of Barry and his wife, Linda.

MOMENTS OF NOTE

Several important updates and panel discussions commenced throughout the board meeting. Here's a rundown:

- Each district met virtually in May to discuss regional challenges. These ranged from recruitment and retention to inflation to state governments voting on electrification legislation.
- The Energy Coalition Panel detailed efforts to include propane in the Build Back Better Act and how to apply for the EPA's Clean School Bus Program.
- In addition to five chair citations and the election of committee chairs and state directors, NPGA announced Ferrellgas' return as a member of its state and regional associations.

PERC UPDATES

Tucker Perkins, president and CEO of the Propane Education & Research Council (PERC), updated the board on priorities, including winter supply and crop yields, convincing consumers and marketers of the importance of renewable propane, and working with Cummins.

On winter supply: "While it is far too early to forecast crop harvest, yield and … moisture content, history tells us that when crops are planted as late as they have been this year, there is increased probability of crop drying demand. This is one more reason marketers and their customers need to prepare for the fall and encourage prefills."

On renewable propane's role: "The Joint Task Force has delivered a definition of renewable propane … as we begin to talk about what it is. The aspiration statement [shares] how renewable propane will help reduce carbon emissions. Most marketers will use this aspirational statement as they work with community leaders, code officials and legislators to clearly show how the industry will evolve with renewable fuels."

And on hopes for the Cummins engine: "PERC is asking for the industry to step up and speak to their truck builders and their local dealers to request this engine. This will create an important 'market pull' for the truck OEMs to engage with Cummins for the propane engine. This is an important step in showing the truck OEMs the value of the propane engine in their truck chassis."

BUSINESS AS USUAL NEXT YEAR

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, this marked the third year without in-person meetings with legislators on Capitol Hill for Propane Days. A hybrid approach allowed leaders to meet with lawmakers virtually. The plan is to return to in-person meetings with Congressmembers in summer 2023. NPGA's fall board meeting will take place Sept. 26-28 in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Jessica Graham is associate editor of Butane-Propane News.





MANAGING STRESS IN THE PROPANE WORKPLACE

A health care professional's advice for reducing stressors & creating a healthier work environment

BY PATRICK JEFFS

The World Health Organization (WHO) has referred to stress as the 21st-century health epidemic. Over the last two years, 67% of people living in the United States have reported a significant increase in stress. More than 70% stated that this affects both their physical and mental health. A 2022 survey by the American Psychological Association listed the top three stressors at work as:

1. Rise in prices due to inflation
2. Supply chain issues
3. Global uncertainty

Given all this, let's explore how to reduce stress at work. According to the American Institute of Stress, the job itself — as well as issues related to the work environment and creating a work-life balance — is a significant cause of stress.

Stress is the body's physical, mental and emotional reaction to adapt and respond to changes, whether positive or negative. People can experience stress from what happens day by day in their environment, in their bodies or even in their thoughts.

This reaction is generated by the human body's autonomic nervous system, resulting in psychological changes that allow the person to be attentive, motivated and avoid danger. Known as "fight or flight," this mechanism is an emergency physiological response that prepares the body for physical action (fight) or to run away (flight).

However, when a person is constantly facing challenges without rest or the possibility of recovering, this can turn negative, generating excessive tension.

Physical & Mental Consequences

Prolonged activation of the stress response can affect both the body's physical and mental health. When it slips out of balance, it can turn into chronic anxiety and, in the worst case, lead to suicidal thoughts.

Anxiety is a normal emotion that can appear from time to time when facing a problem or test or before making an important decision. When the stress level is high, anxiety disorders may appear, which are included in the group of mental illnesses. They prevent the person from leading a normal life.

Anxiety disorders can be manifested as panic attacks when you feel you are about to die; social phobia, when you feel overwhelmed by everyday social situations; other phobias; and generalized anxiety disorder, when the person has exaggerated worry and tension for no apparent reason. In addition to the mental effects, the activation of fight-or-flight mode involves chemical changes in the body, which can alter the person's metabolism. This can cause long-term effects, leading to diseases like diabetes or high blood pressure. Chronic stress can also cause other problems such as arthritis and inflammatory diseases.

The WHO has warned of the high levels of concern and unhappiness in today's world that are causing an epidemic of stress. Stress has become part of people's daily lives, affecting productivity and causing health problems, which at first may remain silent, but may eventually get worse.

Signs of Stress

If you feel anxiety, fear, sadness, frustration or anger, you could be suffering from stress, which could also be worsened by physical symptoms. In addition to emotional changes, stress can manifest itself through changes in your behavior and body.

When you're stressed, you behave differently, such as becoming withdrawn, uncompromising, aggressive or more angry than normal. You can experience



sleeping problems, you can be irritable or tearful, and even your sexual habits can be affected. Some people start smoking, consume more alcohol and even take drugs. Stress can also affect the way you interact with your family and friends.

The body also suffers from symptoms such as headaches, nausea and indigestion. You can increase the respiratory rate, perspire more than normal and feel palpitations or different types of aches and pains. If the stress motive wears off, you will return to normal quickly with no side effects; but if it persists, you could start experiencing long-term effects.

Stages of Stress

If you are suffering from stress, you may be able to identify five stages:

1. *Alarm* — At this stage, the body prepares itself in the best possible way to deal with the stress you are going through. You can have wake-up calls, like almost getting in a car accident or starting to forget tasks or deadlines.
2. *Resistance* — Here, the body tries to return to its normal state, responding to some changes that occur in the alarm stage, such as inflammation. Anti-inflammatory hormones are released to relieve it, but they are usually temporary responses that do not solve the underlying problem.
3. *Recovery* — If the cause of stress disappears or you are able to temporarily pull away from it, your body will begin to recover, returning your systems to normal levels and starting the stress resilience.
4. *Adaptation* — If you do not act in time to recover — either by moving away to rest or by solving the problem that is causing you stress — you will enter the adaptation stage, which involves accepting it as part of your daily life. Stress becomes chronic and takes control of your health, generating, for example, sleep problems, lack of energy, changes in your eating habits or difficulty in dealing with your emotions.
5. *Exhaustion* — With chronic stress, your body begins to get sick, nutrients are depleted and you may require hospitalization, psychiatric assistance or begin dealing with multiple symptoms of depression.

Burnout

When you reach the exhaustion stage, what occurs is commonly called burnout. You feel overwhelmed, emotionally drained and unable to respond to any demand. This can lead to lost interest and motivation, reduced productivity and increased feelings of hopelessness, resentment, despair and the feeling that you have nothing else to give.

Burnout can have very negative effects in all areas of your life, including your home, social life, health and work. At work, it might even cost your position, lead to being fired, or if you feel that your energy is low and you have nothing left to give, it can lead you to quit.

Stress Management Strategies

To deal with stress, there are several techniques and strategies that may be related to action (do something to change the situation), emotions (change your perception over a stressful situation) and acceptance (used when dealing with situations you cannot control).

LESSEN THE STRESS WHILE DRIVING A TRUCK

It's a fine line keeping yourself awake (stimulated) when driving long distances for propane deliveries, because at some point that stimulation causes its own stress. Try to dial it to a minimum while keeping enough energy to stay focused.

DIAL DOWN TENSION WHILE DRIVING

By scanning your body, you'll notice that you might be using extra energy by tensing in one or many areas of your body that don't need to. Notice and relax just in those areas.

EASE YOUR FOCUS AFTER A TRIP

Most of the world can't imagine the focus it takes to do your job. After a big drive, allow your brain to rest. Stare off into the distance. See what you notice around you. Use your senses to take note of what you are curious about. Keeping your mind overly active with technology will only make things worse.

TRACK THE IMPORTANT THINGS

1. Sleep
2. Steps
3. Screen time
4. Water
5. Whole foods (versus processed)

These things are all very difficult to manage in one's life while driving. Keeping track and making sure you're hitting the minimums and possibly increasing your goals will help keep you in balance.

The following strategies summarize how to deal with stressful situations.

1. *Be assertive* — You need to clearly communicate what you want, what you need and what is bothering you. If you do this with empathy and respect, but firmly, you will be proactive and start altering what is stressing you.
2. *Reduce noise* — Slow down by switching off technology, screen time and stimuli. Try to have quiet

moments every day to distinguish the urgent and the important things. You need time to recharge to avoid stress.

3. *Manage your time* — Organize your tasks so you are not covered up with things to do and busy for the entire day. Create a fulfilling routine that includes enjoying yourself.
4. *Create boundaries* — Set rules and establish time for yourself and others. Prioritize and do not let others' needs become more important than yours. This will help you take control and respect yourself.
5. *Stop thinking* — Avoid doing too much analysis. Reorient yourself to parts of your environment, noticing pleasant things out a window or taking a walk to relax your mind.
6. *Attend to your body first* — Listen to the signals of stress your body gives you naturally, such as increased heart rate or shallow breathing. By inverting these and learning what lowers your heart rate or making it a practice to pair deeper breathing with increased stress, you'll be able to better handle the moment in front on you. These actions build our resilience.

Building Resilience Into Your Organization

A key factor to building a more resilient organization is to not put the responsibility of doing so on individuals. There is significant value in leading discussions in leadership and management meetings on how to best implement these resiliency principles into "the way of doing business."

This will begin to create a culture of resiliency, increasing value for employees and driving employee retention through reduced burnouts, and will signal to employees that leadership understands the root causes of burnout and how to address these in a systemic nature.

To succeed with these strategies, you can implement techniques that work. These include keeping a positive attitude, accepting situations that you cannot change, practicing relaxation techniques like meditation or yoga, exercising, making time for hobbies and interests, sleeping and having a rest, limiting the use of alcohol or drugs, spending time with friends and family, and looking for professional assistance like a psychologist or a mental health doctor.

Dr. Patrick Jeffs founded The Resiliency Solution in 2018 to help combat the impact of chronic stress in the workplace. Jeffs has worked with healthcare professionals, government officials, executives, entrepreneurs and many others to improve their day-to-day stress levels and to enhance their organizations' capacity, ultimately enabling these individuals, teams and organizations to maximize their performance. Visit theresiliencysolution.com.





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NAVIGATING POSITIVE WORKPLACE POLITICS WITH YOUR MANAGER

4 questions to consider & 3 steadfast rules for building trust & camaraderie

BY MARGARET MORFORD

It's a simple, real-world fact — and one most people still do not get: Today, most people lose their jobs not because they messed up or made some costly mistake at work, but because they don't understand "workplace politics." In fact, being politically savvy can be the skill that helps you keep your job when you do make a mistake.

Unless you are a hermit living in a cave, you are in some kind of workplace, whether it's in-person, remote or hybrid. And that workplace inevitably has politics. You cannot bring together two employees — employees who often have competing agendas — and not have office politics.

My definition of workplace politics is "the difference between what is right and what is effective." How often in your career have you been right, but everyone hates you for it?

That's the gap you need to understand and be able to work. I would never advocate for walking on others to get what you need, but I do believe in understanding the unspoken messages of your workplace and tapping into the flow of power to accomplish your agenda. I think of it as "how to shake the tree and get the resources you need."

One of the most important political alliances to cultivate is your relationship with your manager. Start by asking yourself this question: "Do I actually manage my relationship with my manager, or just try not to make them mad?" Most people do only the latter. Turn that around and start creating a more positive, effective relationship with your manager by answering the following key questions.

1. What Is My Manager's Preferred Method of Communication?

Is it face-to-face, electronic or voicemail? I once had a manager who responded best to voicemail. He wasn't big on face-to-face interactions because they required too much time. He could return five voicemails in airports faster than he could type texts or emails on his phone. If you left him a voicemail, you almost always got an answer the same day, especially when he was busy.

This strategy also made me look very self-sufficient because I wasn't always in his office asking questions. On the rare occasion when I asked for time on his calendar, he would move me to the



head of the line because he knew if I was asking, it was important.

2. What Time of Day Is My Manager Most Receptive to Talking?

Your manager may be a morning person or more open to longer conversations as the day winds down. If your manager is talkative and you need a quick answer, check their calendar and go see them 15 minutes before they have a meeting or before they typically leave for lunch. Is there a particular day of the week that is better for your manager than others?

I know one governmental group that waits until Wednesdays to ask for anything important from their manager, because on Tuesdays the manager meets with the board of commissioners and Mondays are spent preparing.

3 'POLITICAL RULES' FOR SUCCESSFULLY DEALING WITH MANAGERS

Rule 1

Stay neutral with new managers. When you get a new manager, you will be barraged by people asking you what you think of them. These people will repeat what you say throughout the organization, so say this: "They seem very smart, but I haven't worked with them for very long." This gives your new manager the benefit of the doubt and is both noncommittal and positive.

Rule 2

When your manager says something nice about you, do not deflect the compliment with modesty or with humor by cracking a joke about "maybe this is a good time to ask for a raise." This devalues the compliment and creates an awkward situation for everyone present, even if they know you are kidding.

Here's the perfect reply: "Thank you so much. That means a great deal to me coming from you." You now have tripled the chances your manager will say more nice things about you in the future.

Rule 3

Last, but not least, never speak badly about your manager in the workplace — even if everyone else calls them "the spawn of Satan." By not saying anything bad, you send a clear, unspoken message throughout your organization that you are patient, resilient and loyal — all of which are great qualities to have. You enhance your value and reputation simply by shutting up.

3. When My Manager Needs Advice, Who Do They Consult?

For those of you who have seen the "Godfather" films, think of this advisor as your manager's "Consiglieri." Build a good relationship with this person so they say good things about you to your manager. Remember: this is someone to whom your manager listens and whose opinion your manager greatly values.

4. What Are the Last Three Business Books My Manager Read?

Any book your manager spends valuable time reading, you should read as well. I know one manager who wanted funding in the budget for an additional person but knew his manager hated any increase in headcount. His manager was a great fan of the book "Good to Great." Even though the manager was not much of a reader, he read the book because his manager so valued its insights.

The manager justified his request by saying he needed "the right people on the bus in the right seats" (wording that comes straight from "Good to Great"). This resonated with his manager, and he got the OK to hire the new person.

You can also be politically savvy by giving your manager the gift of a business book you've recently read and agree with. This allows you to use the author as an expert to convert your manager to your way of thinking. Be sure to inscribe the book on the inside fly leaf and sign your name. This way, every time your manager opens the book, they are reminded of the gift. And if they lend it to another person, you will appear to be someone whose opinion your manager values.

If your manager is not a reader, you can still use this strategy. Simply select a book that is short but packed with insights so your manager will be willing to spend an hour reading it.

Margaret Morford is president of The HR Edge Inc, an international management consulting and training firm. She is the author of the business books, "Management Courage — Having the Heart of a Lion" and "The Hidden Language of Business — Workplace Power, Politics & Influence." She can be contacted at 615-371-8200 or mmorford@thehredge.net. Visit thehredge.net.





REPLACE ROUTINE HIRING & PROMOTING PROCESSES WITH NONTRADITIONAL HIRES

How a road less taken can lead to fantastic employees

BY CHRISTINA ARMENTANO

While there is nothing wrong with routines, there are downsides to becoming too comfortable. Sometimes, when tried and true practices become formulaic, we miss opportunities to uncover new and improved solutions.

Just as people become creatures of habit, companies can settle into established patterns, too. Instead of routines like having breakfast at the same time, mowing the lawn and doing laundry on the same day every week, established corporate routines might tend toward other practices, such as looking for new employees in the same places and scouring résumés and applications for indicators of the predictable paths that led predecessors to your door.

Routines prove why the saying, "Don't reinvent the wheel," is a popular mantra. Why spend time creating new, complex processes when the "old" methods are working just fine? But are they? Sometimes, an overreliance on routines — and those creature comforts — leads to missing opportunities to uncover the better solutions right in front of us.

This is a particularly relevant point right now. Across the country, many different industries are experiencing labor shortages. Long-established hiring and promoting routines aren't filling vacancies. It's time to think more broadly about who can succeed in roles within an organization, even if their backgrounds are "outside the box" of what an organization has become accustomed to when hiring or promoting.

At Paraco Gas, our leadership team has learned that varied paths to roles within our company are an asset, and these contributions have made the team stronger. The following is an illustrative example of one employee's varied path both to — and within — Paraco.

Joe Roggio got his start in the heating industry around 20 years ago at a Long Island, New York, oil company. His first job was in customer service, and he worked his way up to hold multiple roles in customer service, retention, dispatch, scheduling and finally, daily operations. Roggio eventually left the oil company to run the dispatch department for a plumbing company, where he was encouraged to get his commercial driver's license (CDL).

That led to a position driving an oil truck for a smaller "mom and pop" company, which sold to a larger company within two years — and then let all its employees go. That's when Roggio became part of the Paraco family. It was just before Thanksgiving 2016 when he started driving bobtail trucks in Long Island, based at the retailer's Riverhead, New York, location.

"As a bobtail driver I was able to learn more about the propane industry, and I truly feel starting at that level allowed me to keep an open mind and is part of the reason why I have been successful in my current role," Roggio said.

"Around 2.5 years ago, I was approached with the opportunity to run our Pennsylvania and western New York region," he continued. "Over the course of my time as the area manager

of this region, I was able to further my knowledge of the industry by overseeing not only the delivery team but the service team as well."

Roggio now oversees the operations for Paraco's entire Metro East division. This area encompasses metro New York, Connecticut and Massachusetts. He has been with Paraco for eight years and was just promoted to his current position.

Roggio's jobs leading to and at Paraco demonstrate how nonstandard pathways can lead to well-rounded, rewarding careers. Employees working in varied jobs bring with them their cumulative backgrounds and experiences. By viewing the job through their diverse lenses, they contribute to problem solving and creative thinking.

Roggio's general manager, Jeff Palen, sums it up this way: "Joe's attention to detail, customer-centric approach and problem-solving mindset all contribute to his team's ability to execute. He empowers and supports his team of drivers and service technicians to make decisions and provide solutions to problems, and most importantly, he leads by example from the front."

According to Palen, Roggio's capacity for change and his willingness to collaborate across the entire organization make him an incredible asset to the company, and these qualities set him up for success in his new role.

Change and collaboration: These are key attributes for anyone in a leadership role, and they are skills that are finely honed when an individual must adapt to circumstances and work with people from a variety of backgrounds. They are also skills that can be difficult to quantify or distill down into a few words for a job description. Additionally, they can be difficult to teach or impart.

Organizations that are currently struggling to fill their job openings should take this example to heart. A job applicant's varied or nontraditional path can bring substantial benefits to your company. You must be willing to view a variety of experiences as an asset and look beyond the job description to learn what else those prior jobs might have taught your applicant.



Christina Armentano is chief operating officer of Paraco Gas. Visit paracogas.com.



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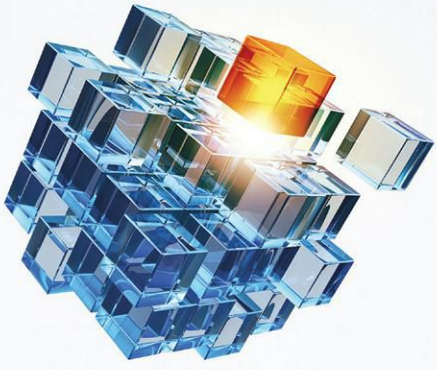

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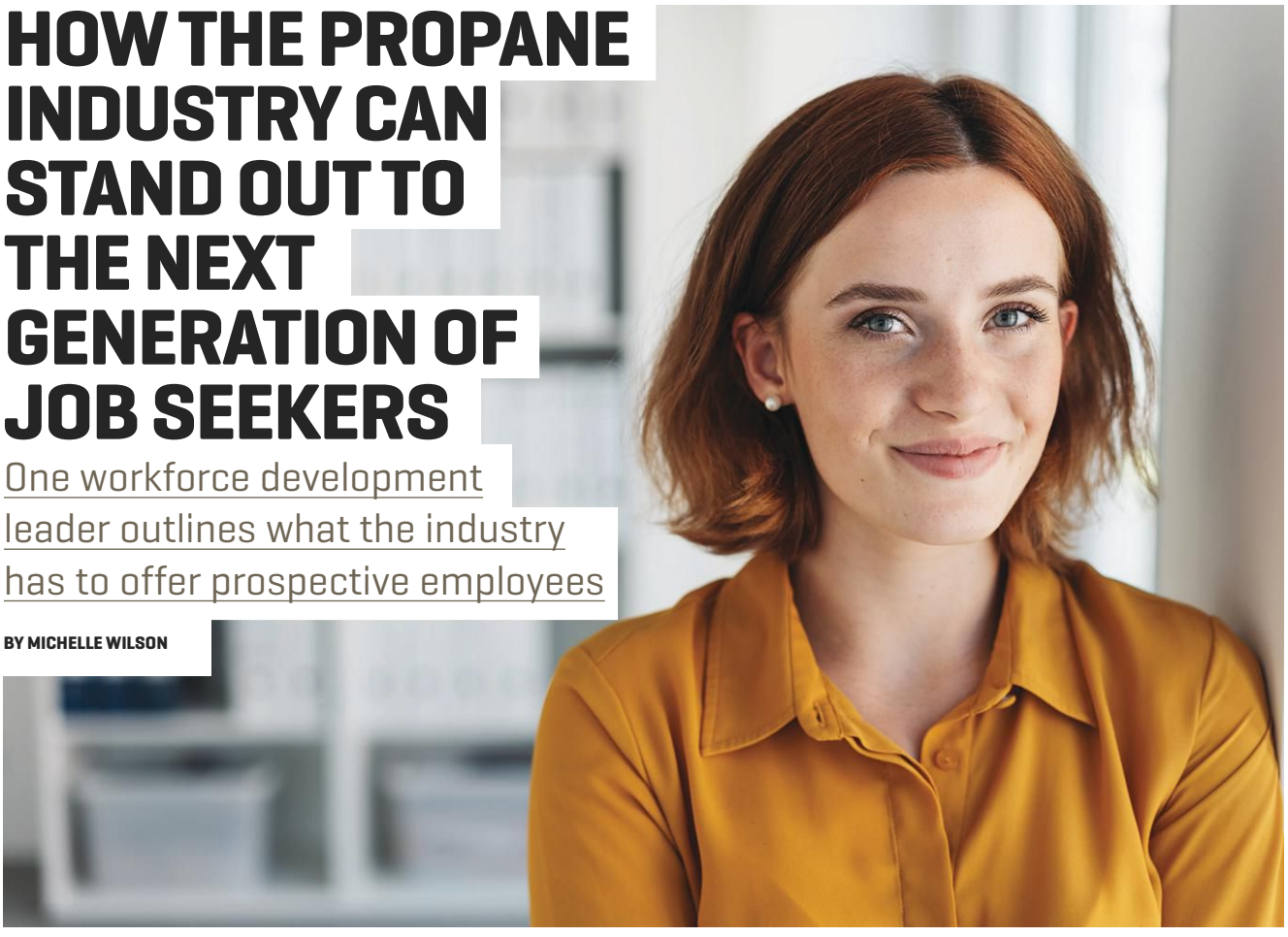
HOW THE PROPANE INDUSTRY CAN STAND OUT TO THE NEXT GENERATION OF JOB SEEKERS

One workforce development leader outlines what the industry has to offer prospective employees

BY MICHELLE WILSON



When you cross paths with your peers at trade shows, association meetings and networking events this summer, there is no doubt that one topic will come up: hiring new employees. The struggle to find quality hires is something propane companies have been dealing with for years, and the challenge has become greater thanks to the nationwide labor shortage. Most propane employees are industry veterans who are moving on to a well-earned retirement. But where does that leave your company?

It's more important than ever for the propane industry to appeal to the next generation of job seekers. But don't worry — you don't have to overhaul your company's work environment or jump through a lot of hoops to attract qualified candidates. The propane industry already offers many of the benefits that Generation Z and millennial job seekers are looking for in their careers. Here's what you should showcase about your company and the propane industry to prospective applicants.

Competitive Pay & Benefits

Whether they are students thinking about what field they want to go into or entry-level applicants planning their next career move, compensation and benefits packages are a significant factor for young job seekers. According to monster.com, seven out of 10 Generation Z applicants described salary as their top motivator and mentioned health insurance as a "must-have."

Propane companies have a long history of taking care of their employees. Propane jobs provide competitive starting wages, significant earning potential and valuable benefits. Plus, education and certification to qualify for most positions are much more affordable than traditional four-year degrees, allowing candidates to enter the workforce with significantly less (or even no) debt.

Doing Better for the Environment

Many job seekers are interested in working in an environmentally conscious industry. As such, it's up to us to make it known that propane gas is a certified clean fuel and has a major role to play in reducing carbon and greenhouse gas emissions now and in the future.

Career Longevity & Opportunities to Grow

There is still a common misconception that trade jobs — including positions in the propane industry — lack opportunities for upward mobility. But as we know, the propane industry offers many diverse career paths that allow for continued skill development and financial growth.

Entry-level positions like delivery drivers, service technicians and customer service representatives are stepping stones to future leadership and management roles. Or, if employees choose to stick with their craft, they go on to hone their expertise and receive promotions and salary increases for doing so. There's really nothing stagnant about a job in the propane industry.

Contributing to the Community

Another aspect of the propane industry that can stand out to the next generation of job seekers is the inherent nature of community involvement. At its core, a propane company is committed to serving its community by supplying the necessities of heat and power. Employees in each department take pride in their role of keeping customers safe and comfortable at an affordable price.

Secondly, it is crucial to highlight the culture of community within your own business. Employee retention tools, like reasonable working hours, a positive work environment, employee initiatives and getting involved with your local community through charities and events, can also double as attractive hiring incentives to prospective candidates.

Get Involved & Drive More Candidates to the Industry

Facing the challenge of a labor shortage and job seekers' market can feel like an uphill climb. But there are many ways that you can not only attract applicants to your business, but also attract them to the propane industry. Consider the aforementioned tips when interviewing prospective candidates or meeting with career development contacts.

Beyond direct interviews with interested applicants, getting involved with workforce development initiatives will provide a return on your investment of time with more and more applicants seeking employment in the propane industry. There is a huge pool of potential applicants within local trade schools and vocational high schools that might not even know that the propane industry matches up with their credits and/or certifications.

Outreach to these institutions can benefit employers, instructors and students alike by increasing awareness of propane jobs, building connections for internship or apprenticeship programs and offering students a direct line to the careers they want right after graduation.

Michelle Wilson is the vice president of Consumer Focus Marketing, founders of the recruiting and workforce development program GenerationNext Propane Pros. She can be reached at michelle_wilson@bostonenv.com or 774-259-9424. Visit nextgenpropane.com.





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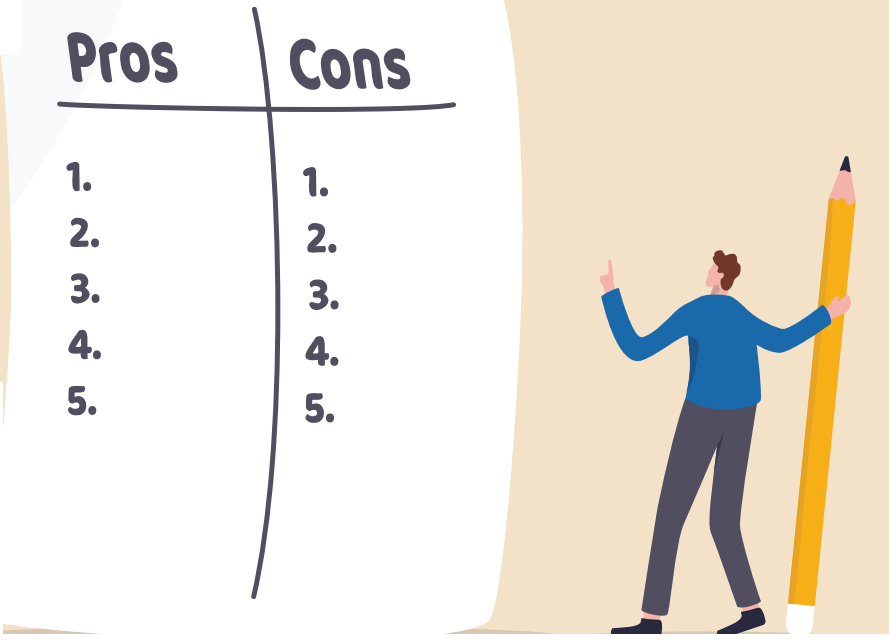
NEW YORK'S EMERGENCY FILL BILL & ITS POTENTIAL REPERCUSSIONS FOR THE PROPANE INDUSTRY

NYPGA's executive director on the flip side of an emergency fill bill intended to help consumers

BY BILL OVERBAUGH



Editor's Note: This column was written in response to and covers challenges related to New York's Assembly Bill 01451. Have thoughts and commentary on the bill or this article? Email bpneditorial@cahabamedia.com.

Upstate New York can get brutally cold in the winter, which is why so many residents rely on the dependable heat that propane provides. When home tank levels start to get low — especially when freezing temperatures are in the short-term forecast — propane companies know they'll be on the receiving end of a raft of requests for fills.

During one of those severe cold snaps in 2017, one propane company was unable to keep up with deliveries and fulfill requests. People ran out of the propane that heats their homes right when the subzero temperatures hit.

Cold and upset customers then contacted their legislators and the media, leading to multiple news stories. Within a month, legislation was introduced with the objective to prevent this situation from ever happening again. Assembly Bill 01451 by Angelo Santabarbara would allow customers to suspend the lease arrangements they have with their propane suppliers if they felt they were in danger of running out of propane.

With legislation, the devil is always in the details, and that was certainly the case with A01451. This was not surprising to most of us in the propane industry, as we were never asked for our thoughts or provided a chance to contribute our expertise. In short, this was a bill to change how propane was delivered in the state of New York — without any input from the propane industry. Naturally, there were problems. This article explores several of the big ones.

1. 'EMERGENCY' WAS LEFT LARGELY UNDEFINED

The heart of the bill was that customers who found themselves low on fuel would be allowed to contact another propane delivery company to fill their tank in an emergency. So, what qualifies as an emergency? Leaving this largely undefined and up to the consumer is problematic because that answer could vary widely from one customer to the next. Some customers call in a panic when fill levels drop below 50%. While most customers are on automatic delivery, there are some who try and squeeze all they can from one tank, hoping to delay the bill for the next fill.

The legislation also gave a propane company only 24 hours to address a customer request for a fill. Under normal circumstances, this might not be a huge issue, but again, when the forecast calls for multiple days of very cold weather, it can take longer than 24 hours to get to everyone.

2. THE LEGISLATION AMOUNTED TO A TAKING OF PROPERTY

This point was a bit more inside baseball than the first, but it is an important one. Propane tanks represent an investment on the part of a propane company, and they count on the revenue generated

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from selling propane to customers to offset those costs.

In 2017, the inability to fulfill customer requests stemmed largely from one company. It's not hard to imagine what happens next: a company has trouble filling orders for customers, those customers all go to other suppliers for fills and the company has an even bigger problem on its hands — no revenue to support the maintenance and replacement of its owned tanks.

Although this would have been a strong legal argument for us, it wasn't the ideal message on which to rest our opposition to a bill; few legislators were going to care about equipment and margins when they had constituents unable to get propane for heat in the dead of winter.

3. SAFETY & LIABILITY ISSUES WERE TOP CONCERNS

One point that did resonate with legislators was the safety angle. Overall, the propane industry has a great track record on safety. Accidents are rare. But when they do happen, it's almost always during a fuel transfer situation, such as a customer fill. Now, add in the potential for unfamiliarity with tank styles when one company is filling tanks that belong to another company, and you have increased the likelihood for accidents considerably. Further, add in the liability concerns. If something does happen during a fill, which company is responsible for absorbing the liability?

Given the problems with this bill and an unwillingness on the part of the legislator who introduced it to talk to the industry, the picture was grim. Although an industry-supported alternative was introduced in the New York Senate by Senator James Tedisco (S7395D) that addressed industry concerns with the bill, the first, more problematic bill sailed through the legislative process and was only halted at the eleventh hour due to some remarkable lobbying efforts on the part of our industry's talented legislative affairs team.

However, this bill reemerges every few years, particularly when there are cold snaps. We have been successful in getting some modifications to the bill that are crucial. Rick Cummings, New York state director for the National Propane Gas Association, and Dick Brescia, New York Propane Gas Association lobbyist, have worked tirelessly trying to get to an agreement that will help consumers without causing major problems for propane providers. Tightening what defines an emergency, allowing for a longer response period than 24 hours and codifying a requirement that any propane company that fills a tank it does not own must have, at minimum, $1 million in liability insurance and will assume all liability — these are all important improvements to these proposals.

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

This might feel like an issue that is confined to New York, New England or maybe just the northern regions of the country. However, any state with propane customers can experience shortages, and shortages can be caused by a variety of issues. Changes in global demand, legislation banning the installation of propane in new construction as part of a push to renewables, or even severe weather can all affect supply and delivery. And, as the New York case shows, it only takes one such incident to get the legislative ball rolling.

On June 2, the final day of New York's legislative session, the New York Senate passed the version of the Propane Emergency Delivery Act that had advanced from the assembly. Having passed both chambers, it now heads to Governor Kathy Hochul's desk for her signature or veto. At press time, there remain problematic elements in the bill, which we will be working to address.

Bill Overbaugh is the executive director for the New York Propane Gas Association. He is a third-generation propane marketer who worked in the family business for nearly 20 years before selling two years ago. Overbaugh now works to promote propane in New York amid aggressive regulations that threaten propane livelihoods. Visit nypga.org.



MOBILE SERVICES TO ENHANCE DRIVER PERFORMANCE ON THE ROAD

4 ways mobile driver documentation can save you time & money

BY ALEX BURNS



Running a propane business relies on many moving parts, and there's no doubt that one of the most critical departments is your delivery team. Finding ways to improve efficiency for drivers is invaluable to help your employees work efficiently, keep daily operations on track and minimize risk for your company. Have you heard about how your peers across the United States are starting to use mobile services to do just that?

Mobile services aren't new for propane delivery teams; using mobile technology for dispatching and route tracking is quite commonplace. But have you considered implementing a mobile application for drivers to input critical documentation electronically?

Following suit of mobile safety inspections, mobile driver documentation is the next opportunity for propane marketers to eliminate documentation error rates and subsequently protect their employees and companies from unnecessary risk.

HOW DOES MOBILE DRIVER DOCUMENTATION WORK?

Mobile driver documentation is completed on tablets instead of by hand on paper forms. The mobile forms provide intuitive prompts and form fields to eliminate factors like illegible handwriting or incomplete documentation to create 100% accurate and complete documentation.

It's a significant time saver for drivers in the field. After a mobile form is complete, a copy is sent to and stored in an electronic database where managers and office personnel can easily access it and generate management reports.

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1. Completing Monthly Meter Creep Test & Discharge System Inspections

The Department of Transportation (DOT) requires a monthly inspection of all cargo tank motor vehicles — aka bobtails — in service. With mobile driver documentation, your drivers can complete these monthly inspections faster and with greater accuracy so they can get back out on their routes and you can be confident they are operating vehicles that are safe. Plus, you will have electronic documentation of each vehicle's monthly inspection in your database instead of a jumbled filing cabinet packed with paper forms.

2. Reporting Unsafe Conditions

Reporting unsafe conditions at customer locations is a critical responsibility for drivers out in the field. They are visiting customer locations regularly on deliveries and are often the first line of defense in spotting unsafe conditions.

Drivers with tablets can use mobile services to take photos and report these unsafe conditions in real time and notify your office digitally so that you can address and resolve the issue quickly — and have documentation of the initial report in the event of litigation.

3. Identifying Tank Set Follow-Ups
Your delivery drivers are visiting customer tank sets every day; given the right tools, they can also identify tank sets that require follow-up more efficiently with the help of mobile documentation. One of the most common causes of propane accidents is homeowner modification, either to the tank set itself or to the property, causing the tank set to no longer be compliant.

When a delivery driver identifies a tank set in need of follow-up, they can take a photo with their tablet, include any relevant notes, upload that to your digital database and flag it for review from management all from the cab of their truck.

4. Evaluating Driver Performance
Mobile driver documentation can be a huge help for your management team, too. With drivers completing all their documentation digitally, your managers have a readily available performance log for each driver.

Managers can track driver performance and provide real-time feedback as necessary. This process helps your drivers continue to improve their skills and helps management evaluate performance in a much more efficient manner.

IS MOBILE DRIVER DOCUMENTATION RIGHT FOR MY BUSINESS?

Whether your company already uses some type of mobile application and digital documentation service or you are just starting to think about switching from paper forms, it's a good idea to consider your drivers in your decision-making. Mobile documentation is a game changer for driver efficiency, documentation accuracy and overall risk reduction for your company.

> Mobile documentation is a game changer for driver efficiency.

Alex Burns is vice president of the P3 Mobile & P3 Compliance System division of P3 Propane Safety. Contact her at alex_burns@p3propanesafety.com. Visit p3propane.com.







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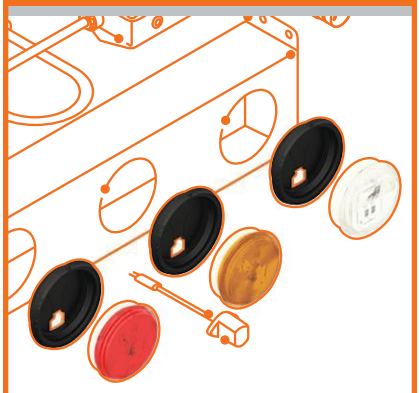

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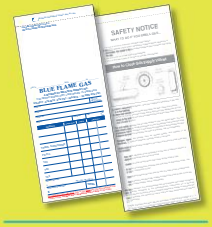

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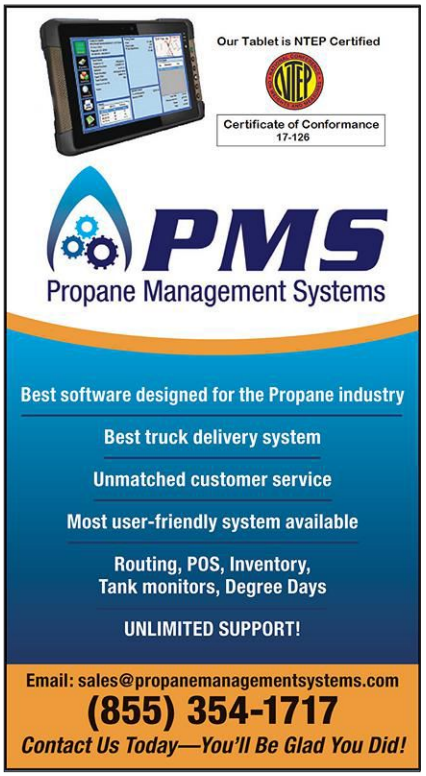



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Tyler Machado

Analyst
Cetane Associates LLC



Describe your current role at your company. I am an analyst on the mergers and acquisitions (M&A) deal execution team for Cetane Associates LLC. I perform financial analysis and provide insights on the industry and deal process to clients.

As a newcomer to the industry, what's the most interesting area of the propane industry right now? The delivered fuels area is the most interesting to me right now. We are at a very interesting point where there is a lot of consolidation, and companies that have been owned by the same families for generations are starting a new chapter. It has truly been a privilege and joy working at Cetane and assisting these individuals and families with a pivotal moment in their lives.

I've especially enjoyed meeting business owners and other industry people at the National Propane Gas Association (NPGA) 2022 Southeast Propane Expo in Nashville, Tennessee, and more recently at the 2022 Propane Days in Washington, D.C. The propane industry is unique; it has a tight-knit sense of community and feels like a big family — one where everyone is always willing to communicate and give each other insights and best practices based on their shared industry experiences.

What's something that not a lot of people know about you? I play the guitar — specifically rock, blues and pop. John Mayer is my biggest influence and favorite artist.

Name one or some of your greatest personal successes. The best is yet to come! Although I have only been in the industry for a short amount of time, I feel myself learning a lot every day about the industry, how companies are run and the M&A deal process.

Is there a tool or technology that you rely on to do your job? Microsoft Excel — I use it every day. It's an extremely powerful tool and essential to performing complex calculations and dealing with vast quantities of data analysis.

What's one thing you wish you knew earlier in your career that you know now? The importance of networking and building meaningful relationships. The 2022 NPGA Southeast Expo was my first time having the opportunity to meet members of the propane industry from across the country.

It was a blast talking to everyone and learning about them both personally and professionally, especially at the Young Gassers event. I'm excited to be joining their Fantasy Football League this fall. I look forward to meeting others in the propane industry and building relationships in the future for years to come.

If you could have dinner with anyone alive or dead, who would it be? Julius Caesar; he probably has some good stories. I love history, specifically the Roman and medieval time periods. I think it would be interesting to hear the accounts of someone who was an integral part of that period and in shaping history.

What skill do you think everyone in your role or a similar one should learn? Excellent communication. I can't stress the importance of being able to get your point across thoughtfully and clearly and make things understandable, especially when you are working in a service-based role.

With clear communication, you can pass along knowledge. You want your colleagues and clients to be confident in your thought process, judgments and decision-making. This stems from clear communication. Communication is everything.

What's the last thing you read? "Barbarians at the Gate" by Bryan Burrough and John Helyer. The writing and storytelling aspect was fantastic; it gave great firsthand accounts of the events that transpired for a historic corporate acquisition.

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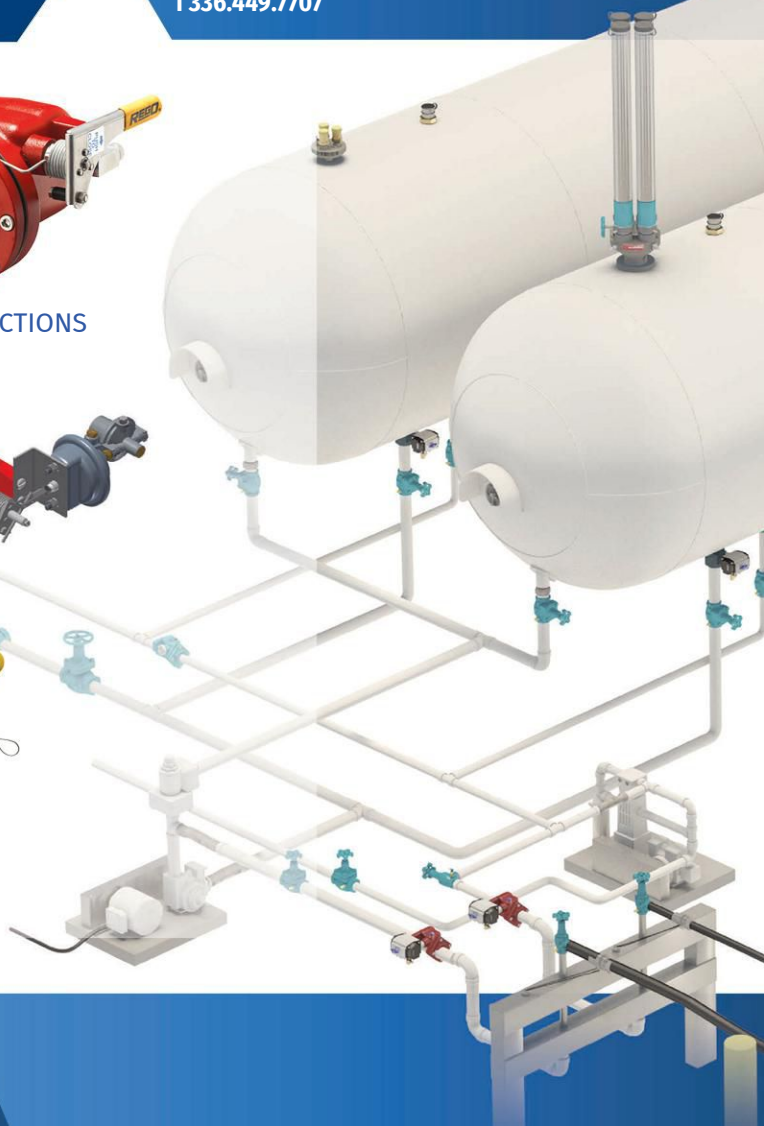

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