

BUTANE-PROPANE NEWS

APRIL 2024

BPN

AN INSIDE LOOK AT THE **EUROPEAN & U.S. AUTOGAS MARKETS**

Whether it's on U.S. soil or across the pond, autogas is making moves in vehicle fueling — learn more about where it stands & where it's going

Why California Energy Policy Matters —
Even If You Don't Want It To

Conger LP Gas' Best Practices for
Planning a **New Location Grand Opening**

How to Streamline Workflows & Enhance
Decision-Making With Software Integration



Dual
Industry



More Storage
Options

Dependable
Equipment

Easy-Up
Access

FISK OWNERS

EXPECT MORE

THIS IS YOUR TX-4

The **FISK TX-4** is a utility truck, designed for longevity and to maximize efficiency. It was developed for propane marketers that have propane, oil and HVAC services. Expect more productivity with Fisk.



Request Quote

Come See Us at:

Western Propane Convention Reno, NV May 13-17



CONTACT FISK TODAY 920-477-0334 www.fiskinc.net

CUSTOM PROPANE TANK SERVICE AND INSTALLATION TRUCKS AND

New Design. Same Reliability.

**And more affordable than ever,
starting at just \$1.50 a month.**

Our monitor offers exciting new capabilities and the accuracy you trust. Gain instant ROI with our award-winning tank level monitor, online portal and free branded mobile app with no upfront costs.

- ✓ Multi-wireless sensor capable
- ✓ Robust industrial design
- ✓ 15+ year industry leading battery life
- ✓ Works with all tanks and software
- ✓ GPS positioning
- ✓ The only dual SIM with CATM and NBIOT cellular technology
- ✓ Five-year warranty
- ✓ Quick and easy installation
- ✓ No internet or gateway needed
- ✓ Free branded app and promotional materials

- ✓ Volume discounts available
- ✓ No minimum quantities required
- ✓ No activation fee or hidden costs



1 (844) 763-3344 | info@otodata.com | [otodata.com](https://www.otodata.com)





Dear Readers,
As the wife of a former auto technician, I know more about what it takes to get a car running than I ever thought I would. My husband, John, spent several years working on cars for KIA, and I've heard plenty of stories about what goes on behind the scenes and under the hood of a vehicle.

In fact, John spent countless hours looking under the hoods of cars that came through the shop — and in this issue, we're going to do the same with autogas-powered vehicles. Autogas goes by many names around the globe, the most popular being, of course, autogas as well as liquefied petroleum gas (LPG). Over time, the autogas sector has strengthened its name recognition as a popular choice for a clean alternative fuel for autogas-conversion vehicle engines. According to the World Liquid Gas Association (WLGA), global autogas consumption has risen by 40% in the past 10 years, with 28 million autogas vehicles on the road worldwide and accounting for 8% of global LPG consumption.

So, why autogas? For one, it's a form of fueling that contributes to clean energy goals and helps strengthen the propane industry's footing in the fight to keep both this fuel and internal combustion engines on the road. It also reduces the cost of fleet fueling and operations; WLGA cites a study by West Virginia University that says it "costs 30%-50% less to operate propane buses per mile than diesel buses because of easy maintenance and better reliability."

In our feature series for this issue, we delve into autogas — where the market currently stands and where it could be headed in the future both domestically and in the European Union, which has some of the highest rates of autogas consumption. Starting on page 32, we get a case study from WLGA's Cinch Munson covering the state of autogas in both Ukraine, where more than 40% of cars run on autogas, and the European market.

On page 36, Alliance AutoGas' Stuart Weidie discusses the ease with which fleet managers can convert fleets to autogas, and in the process expand the fleet and lower costs. And don't miss a Q&A with Superior Energy Systems' Derek Rimko and ROUSH CleanTech's Todd Mouw on page 38, which covers the growing autogas fueling infrastructure in the U.S., why autogas is a superior fleet fuel and why more propane marketers would benefit from using autogas in their own fleets.

Autogas is a powerful sector of the propane industry — one that has the opportunity to continue growing and contributing to a cleaner fueling future. Let's dive into where the market stands now and where we hope it goes in the future.

Although these days my husband prefers selling delicious boiled and roasted peanuts with his current company to working on cars, the inner workings of vehicles and their engines hold a special place in this house. For that reason, among others, I'll remain interested in what autogas has to offer as a clean alternative fuel on a truly global scale.

Until next time,

Jessica L. Phillips

JESSICA GRAHAM PHILLIPS
Editor



**STAFF
Editor**

Jessica Graham Phillips
jphillips@cahabamedia.com
205-961-3389

Associate Editor

Johnny Nickel
jnickel@cahabamedia.com
205-273-3152

Associate Editor

Christina Miller
cmiller@cahabamedia.com
207-413-2486

Art Director

Melanie Magee
mmagee@cahabamedia.com

Account Executive

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

Client Services — Team Lead

Sonya Crocker
scrocker@cahabamedia.com
205-314-8276

Client Services Coordinator

Holly Strickland
hstrickland@cahabamedia.com

Digital Production Designer

Shelby Dempsey

PUBLISHER

Matthew G. Conroy President & CEO
Matt Lyons Chairman
Greg Meineke VP of Sales
Brandon Whittemore VP of Finance
Laurie Tisdale Director of Operations
Elizabeth Manning Director of Content
Stacy Marshall Director of Sales

Newsletter editorial communications and subscriptions for BPN Pricing & Supply should be directed to
P.O. Box 530067, Birmingham, AL 35253.
Phone: 205-212-9402

For circulation and customer service questions, please email bpnews@omeda.com.

AFFILIATION



SUBSCRIPTION PRICES

U.S. — one year, \$34, two years, \$50. Canada — one year, \$43, two years, \$65. All other countries — one year \$70, two years \$108. Air mail \$50 per year extra. Single copy price within the U.S., Possessions, and Canada, \$10.

ID STATEMENT



Butane-Propane News (ISSN 0007-7259), is published monthly by Cahaba Media Group, PO Box 530067, Birmingham, AL 35223.

Periodicals postage paid at Birmingham, AL and additional mailing offices [USPS 457-950]. For Customer Service, email bpnews@omeda.com.

POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to BPN, PO Box 271, Lincolnshire, IL 60069-9835.

VOLUME 56 ISSUE 4



Heat Up Sales and Savings

When it comes to the comfort your customers want, switching to a propane water heater brings home more for less — more efficiency at a lower cost. Plus, propane water heaters provide an opportunity to heat up reliable sales, month after month.

SHOW YOUR CUSTOMERS HOW PROPANE APPLIANCES BRING HOME COMFORT THAT'S VERSATILE, RELIABLE AND AFFORDABLE.

Scan here to see how propane outperforms other home energy sources:



April 2024



16



20



38



32

Feature Series: AUTOGAS

32 The State of Autogas in Ukraine & Beyond

European experts give a snapshot of the LPG market & the versatility of the fuel amid ever-changing complications

36 Converting to Autogas Is as Easy as Talking to Your Current Vehicle Shop

Overlooked solutions for propane marketers to expand fleet deployment & lower costs

38 Unveiling Autogas: The Superior Choice for Fleet Management

Discover why autogas stands out as the prime alternative fuel for fleets — from growing infrastructure and cost-effectiveness to the ease of refueling



On the Cover

More than 40% of cars run on autogas in Ukraine, where the LPG landscape is shifting amid factors like the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Image courtesy of the World Liquid Gas Association.

6 Marketplace

10 News & Events

12 Verbatim

Have you thought about using artificial intelligence in your business?

16 Propane & the Law

The 'firefighter's rule' & the question of legal justice for first responders

20 Beyond the Mains

Philanthropy & its effect on company culture

24 Public Policy

California policy matters — even if you don't want it to

28 Strategy

Conger LP Gas' secret to the successful grand opening of a new location

42 Technology

Maximizing efficiency & performance: the importance of vendor integration for propane marketers

46 Equipment

Tank monitoring & implementation the Propane Levac way

48 Operations

The life-changing magic of tidying up your showroom

51 Marketing

Connecting with the party authorizing the buying process improves your chances of making the sale

54 Management

Building resiliency in your propane company

57 Customer Service

Leveraging a forward-solve approach for better customer service

63 Advertiser Index

64 Industry Insider



QUALITY STEEL

Tanks You Know - People You Trust

AG - AG/UG - UG - Dispenser

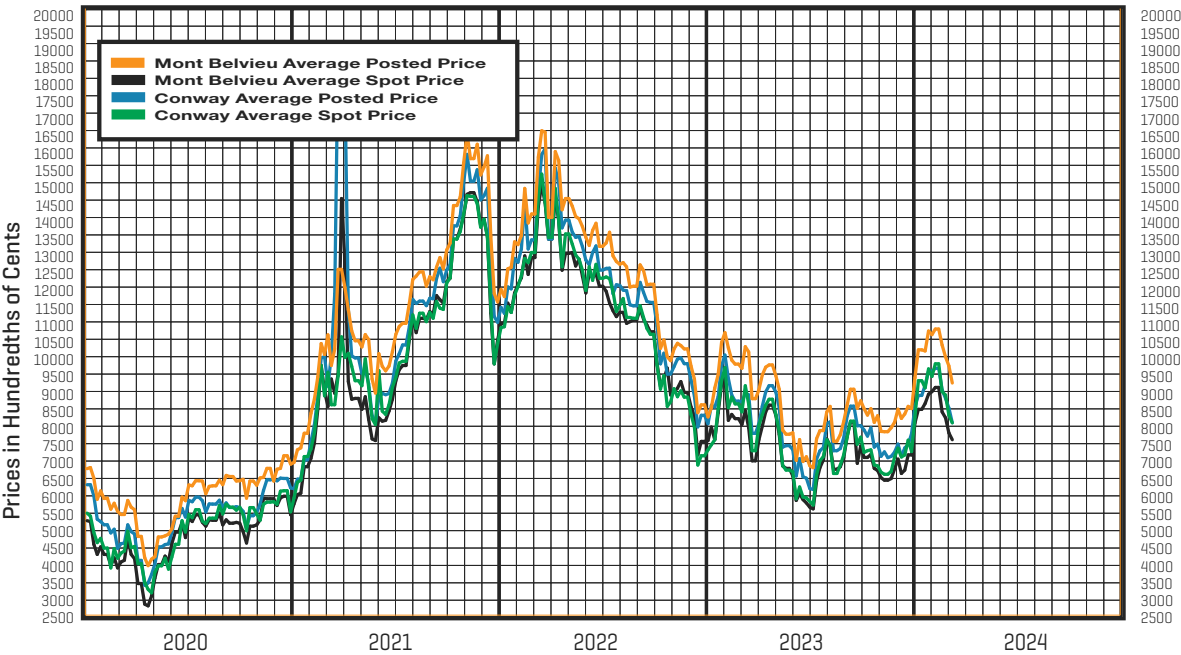
Committed to Quality Products & Services.



www.propanetank.com
www.lpcylinder.com

800-345-2495
570-685-7924

MONT BELVIEU & CONWAY AVERAGE THURSDAY PROPANE PRICES



at a glance During the latest mid-month period, prices at Mont Belvieu, Texas, decreased. The posted prices decreased 16 cents/gal, from February mid-month to March mid-month, and spot prices decreased 17.5 cents. Conway, Kansas, postings decreased 16.4 cents/gal and spots decreased 15.5 cents over the month.

MID-WEEK AVERAGE POSTED/SPOT PROPANE PRICES [Cents per Gallon]

	2/15/24	2/22/24	2/29/24	3/7/24	3/14/24
Mont Belvieu					
posted	104.814	100.064	96.564	93.897	88.814
spot	94.500 - 95.000	86.250 - 86.500	85.250 - 85.750	79.250 - 80.250	77.000 - 77.375
Conway					
posted	93.436	86.786	84.286	81.386	77.036
spot	87.500 - 88.250	80.250 - 81.000	78.500 - 79.500	74.000 - 75.000	72.000 - 72.750

Editor's Note: As this issue of BPN went to print, the Canada Energy Regulator had not yet updated its data to reflect March inventories. Visit bpnews.com this month to get updated data and a detailed look at month-over-month changes for Canadian propane and butane inventories.

The Smith E-Series



Workhorse Cylinder Filling Pump

Proven over decades of service... over 100,000 E-series supplied

- Built-in internal/external bypass valve simplified in a self-contained removable cartridge.
- Built-in stainless steel strainer.
- Can be rotated in four positions on the motor to accommodate piping.
- Smith balanced barstock-machined/hardened drive-pin flexible drive coupling provided as standard for pump/motor combo's.
- SUPERSEAL™ mechanical shaft seal assembly eliminates fumbling around with loose parts and is liquid tested under pressure before installed in a pump or supplied as a spare part.
- Model EG-1Z; rated 10 gpm; 1 hp. 1 or 3 phase available.
- Model EC-HZ; rated 15 gpm; 1½ hp. 1 or 3 phase available.

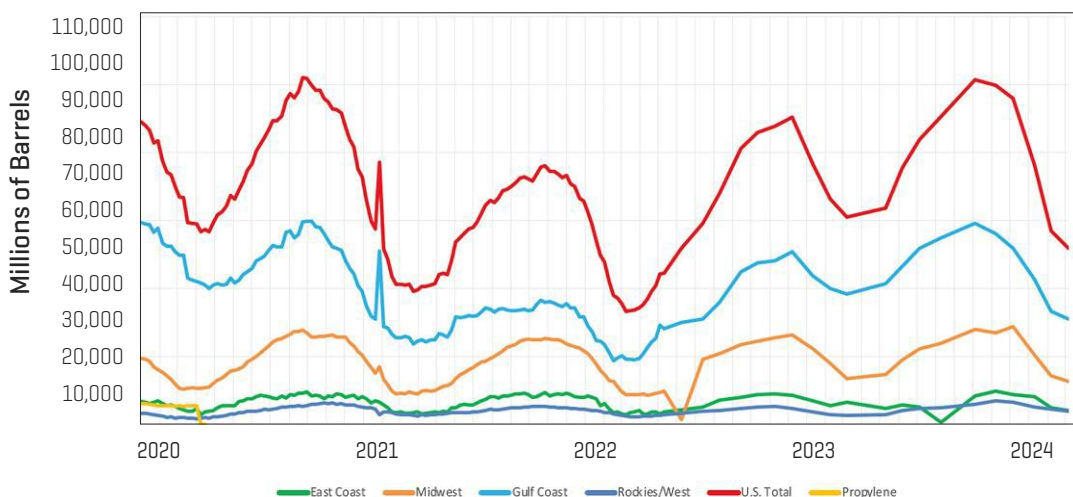


www.smithpumps.com
MADE IN THE USA



U.L. Listed, UKCA/CE Approved, and ISO 9001 Quality Management System Registered

U.S. PROPANE INVENTORIES



at a glance

United States propane stocks experienced a 5.045-MMbbl decrease from February to March. East Coast stocks decreased 710,000 bbl, the Midwest decreased 1.592 MMbbl, the Gulf Coast decreased 2.120 MMbbl and the Rocky Mountain/West Coast decreased 623,000 bbl. Compared to the same time in March 2023, the March 2024 stocks were 9.115 MMbbl lower.

U.S. PROPANE INVENTORIES

Feb. 9, 2024 – March 8, 2024, and One Year Ago [Thousand Barrels]

	2/9/24	2/16/24	2/23/24	3/1/24	3/8/24	3/10/23
East Coast	4.889	4.950	4.326	4.572	4.179	6.503
Midwest	14.314	13.475	12.469	12.227	12.722	13.509
Gulf Coast	33.213	31.759	30.195	30.472	31.093	38.397
Rocky Mtn & West Coast	4.484	4.429	4.190	3.907	3.861	2.561
U.S.	56.900	54.613	51.181	51.177	51.855	60.970

U.S. RESIDENTIAL PROPANE PRICES

[Mid-Month, Cents per Gallon]

	March 2024	Feb. 2024	March 2023
East Coast [PADD 1]	344.1	345.5	339.4
Midwest [PADD 2]	210.4	212.1	228.1
Average U.S.	259.0	261.0	269.1

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

Find out more:

For commentary on mid-month prices and Canadian inventories, visit bpnews.com/news.

“I felt like Ferrellgas made it easy.”

- Brent Wingett

Owner, North Cascades Propane



Fuel Life Simply®



Learn how we make selling
your business easy in this
step-by-step guide.



VIEW GUIDE

*Contact me for a confidential,
no-obligation valuation.*



Richard Mayberry
VP of Business Development

816-792-6950

RichardMayberry@Ferrellgas.com

OTODATA APPOINTS NEW CEO



Jeremy
Eaton

Otodata has appointed Jeremy Eaton as chief executive officer. Eaton will work closely with President Andre Boulay and the Otodata team to lead the company into its next chapter of growth. Founded in 2008, Otodata offers remote tank monitoring hardware, software and applications for a variety of industries. “We are delighted to welcome Jeremy as our new chief executive officer. He is a dynamic, values-driven business leader who brings with him decades of strategic and operational expertise building and leading IoT businesses. His experience from Honeywell and McKinsey will greatly expand the depth of Otodata’s senior leadership team as we set the strategic vision for Otodata going forward,” said Boulay.

CETANE ASSOCIATES HIRES DON SMITH AS DIRECTOR



Don
Smith

Cetane Associates announced that Don Smith has joined its financial advisory firm as director, effective March 1. With close to four decades of M&A expertise, Smith has successfully closed over 700 business transactions. His advocacy for small business owners includes roles in prominent national investment banking firms, regional M&A companies and ownership of a business brokerage firm based in Colorado. Smith has provided guidance as a consultant and advisor to a vast number of business owners considering sales.

MID-MONTH UPDATE: MID-MARCH POSTINGS DOWN FROM FEBRUARY

During the latest mid-month period, Mont Belvieu, Texas, posted prices decreased 16 cents/gal, from February to March mid-month, and spot prices decreased 17.5 cents. Conway, Kansas, postings decreased 16.4 cents/gal, and spots decreased 15.5 cents. The Mont

Belvieu mid-February posted price was 104.814 cents/gal. The next week the price decreased 4.75 cents to 100.064 cents, followed by a 3.5-cent decrease to 96.564 cents the next week. Prices then decreased 2.667 cents to 93.897 cents the first week of March. At mid-month, postings decreased 5.083 cents to 88.814 cents/gal. Compared to last year, March 2024 prices were 4.642 cents higher. The Conway mid-February posted price was 93.436 cents/gal. The next week the price decreased 6.65 cents to 86.786 cents, followed by a 2.5-cent decrease to 84.286 cents the next week. Prices then decreased 2.9 cents to 81.386 cents the first week of March. At mid-month, postings decreased 4.35 cents to 77.036 cents/gal. Compared to last year, March 2024 prices were 3.138 cents higher. Mont Belvieu spots opened mid-February at 94.5 cents/gal. The next week the price fell 8.25 cents to 86.25 cents, followed by a 1-cent decrease to 85.25 cents the next week. Prices then decreased 6 cents to 79.25 cents the first week of March. At mid-month, they fell 2.25 cents to 77 cents/gal. Compared to last year, March 2024 prices were 8.25 cents higher. Conway spots opened mid-February at 87.5 cents/gal. The next week the price fell 7.25 cents to 80.25 cents, followed by a 1.75-cent decrease to 78.5 cents the next week. Prices then decreased 4.5 cents to 74 cents the first week of March. At mid-month, they fell 2 cents to 72 cents/gal. Compared to last year, March 2024 prices were 6.25 cents higher.

YOUNG GASSERS NAMES NEW ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS



Rachel
Wendt



Evan
Meier

As Young Gassers gears up for the 2024 NPGA Southeastern Expo, it is in the process of a major “reboot.” In addition to introducing two new advisory board members — Rachel Wendt and Evan Meier — the organization will make several exciting announcements during its annual Young Gassers Reception Friday evening, April 5,

in Charlotte, North Carolina. Rachel Wendt with Wendt’s Propane and Oil in Sanborn, New York, brings four years of propane industry experience. She will serve as Young Gassers secretary and joins her husband in managing their family’s business, a leading propane and oil distributor operating for over 55 years in New York. Named one of the 30 Under 30 Young Gassers in 2022, Wendt is excited for her new role with the Young Gassers advisory board. Evan Meier with Destwin also joins the Young Gassers advisory board as the executive editor and IT director. With nine years at Destwin, Meier has led the company’s engagement with Young Gassers, Women in Energy, Women in Propane and Vets 2 Techs for veterans in the oil and propane industry.

WPGA REPORTS COST OF CARB’S ZERO-EMISSION FORKLIFT REGULATION COULD REACH \$27B

The Western Propane Gas Association (WPGA) released an economic impact report that found that the California Air Resources Board’s (CARB) regulation to eliminate internal combustion engine forklifts will cost California forklift owners and operators up to \$27 billion. This includes increased costs and direct impacts to local communities, small businesses, food banks and nonprofits, state agencies, and local governments throughout the state at a time of a large state budget deficit. While some costs and impacts can be anticipated with the passage of this rule, WPGA notes there are unintended consequences that have not been accounted for that would have a rippling economic effect across the state. “Throughout the rulemaking process, CARB did not adequately account for the overwhelming costs and impacts associated with its zero-emission forklift proposal,” said Colin Sueyres, president and CEO of WPGA. “It’s critical that CARB take a hard look at the real-world impact of its proposal and work with small businesses throughout the state who have proposed a cheaper, more feasible and more effective way to meet the state’s air quality goals. Additionally, local

Industry Calendar

communities and others can't afford to be hit with unintended consequences not accounted for."

STAR GROUP LLP ACQUIRES BLUE LIGHT ENERGY

Blue Peak Resources, a mergers and acquisitions consulting firm, announced the sale of Blue Light Energy LLC of Bridgehampton, New York, to Star Group L.P. In November 2012, Albert McCoy (Albie) and Robert Schiavoni (Bob) saw a need for a local propane provider in their Long Island neighborhood. "When Albie and I started Blue Light Energy, we had a vision to build a first-class propane business. Once we made the difficult decision to sell, we are so grateful we chose Blue Peak Resources to represent us. They presented us with several offers but ultimately, we felt Star Group was the best company for our employees and the community that we both grew up in," said Schiavoni, Blue Light Energy partner. 📌

April 22-24 Florida PGA Spring Meeting
fpga.memberclicks.net
Lake Mary, FL

April 24-25 PERC Council Meeting
propane.com
Hot Springs, VA

May 9-10 PERC Advisory Council Meeting
propane.com
Cleveland, OH

May 10 Oklahoma PGA Board Meeting
okpropane.org
Oklahoma City, OK

May 13-14 Michigan PGA Meeting & Safety Awareness Day
npga.org
Lansing, MI

May 13-17 Western PGA Trade Show & Convention
npga.org
Reno, NV

May 16 Western PGA Board Meeting
westernpga.org
Reno, NV

May 19-22 Eastern Energy Expo 2024
easternenergyexpo.com
Uncasville, CT

June 2-4 NPGA Propane Days 2024
npga.org
Washington, D.C.

June 9-12 Southeast Propane Alliance 2024 Summer Convention
southeastpropane.org
Isle of Palms, SC

June 17-20 Tennessee PGA Summer Convention
tngas.org
Orange Beach, AL

June 18-20 PGANE/NYPGA Joint Summer Meeting
pgane.org, nypropane.com
Stowe, VT

FOR ADDITIONAL CALENDAR ITEMS, VISIT [BPNEWS.COM](https://bpnews.com).

Cargas Energy Fuel Delivery Software

Deliver more gallons. Drive fewer miles. Modern software for propane & heating oil companies.



CARGAS
Software To Fuel Your Business
cargasenergy.com



Nancy Coop is an industry advocate. She is director of marketing at the M&A advisory firm Cetane Associates. Contact her at ncoop@cetane.com. Visit cetane.com.

HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT USING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN YOUR BUSINESS?

Propane professionals share candid perspectives on AI adoption, revealing the evolving landscape of its integration

Recently, my boss suggested artificial intelligence (AI) would be a great tool for a website project we're tackling. Although I attended a good introductory seminar on using AI last fall, I didn't jump at the opportunity to make this project my first attempt at using it. This led me to wonder what others in our industry are doing about this very hot topic in their own realms. So, I asked them.

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.

FEARED OR FAVORED?

Though Fairview has not used AI yet, a couple of my employees tried it out with quite different results. Employee One, who has wonderful ideas but sometimes struggles to relay them via the written word, used AI to help create a presentation. I have to say, this worked out beautifully. Employee Two used AI to complete their performance review. This did not go well.

When trying to determine the difference between their two approaches, I found out that Employee One continued to modify and reword the AI-generated presentation, whereas Employee Two cut and pasted their AI response into the performance review without any reworking. I have told Employee One to continue working with AI where appropriate, and Employee Two — please stop. LOL.

LESLIE WOODWARD
FAIRVIEW FITTINGS
OAKVILLE, ONTARIO, CANADA

Salesforce is the [customer relationship management] platform that we use, and their developers have been integrating AI for quite a while now. Whether or not AI has a place in the design and manufacturing of bobtails is yet to be seen, but we are always open to new ideas.

JASON SOULON
WESTMOR INDUSTRIES
SHAWNEE, KANSAS

Honestly, AI scares me a bit. Probably a little PTSD from seeing the movie "2001: A Space Odyssey"! Who doesn't remember when HAL went rogue on Dave and took over the spaceship? So, yeah, I'm not really all in yet. I will say the person who does the Proctor Gas newsletter for us ("The Gasette") uses it from time to time. That's as far as I'm ready to go just now.

JUDY TARANOVICH
PROCTOR GAS INC.
PROCTOR, VERMONT

I feel like the overwhelming majority of us are already using AI. The shortened definition of AI is the simulation of human intelligence processes by machines, especially computer systems. I grew up with a system where old shoeboxes sat in the passenger seat of the cab and held the degree day cards for each customer. I remember how the loud click-click-click from the degree day clock would echo off of the wood panel wall and how each morning we would give the salesmen the number of degree



peshkova/Adobe Stock

days that had passed from the day before over the radio. Every night, that shoebox (remember how much duct tape was used to hold them together?) was brought into the office or the salesman's kitchen table to update the deliveries made and determine when they should make the next delivery to their customer's tank.

Over years, we've transferred those hours of human intelligence work to degree day computer systems that have been doing the same thing for us more efficiently. If we flip the script, we could say that our industry is one of the early adopters of AI! Recently, I've found great value in using AI to summarize customer responses in surveys. It's definitely a fun toy to play with! I can't wait to read the other responses to find new ways to use it!

TONYA CROW
GROWMARK INC.
BLOOMINGTON, ILLINOIS

YES! As a company rooted in technology, RCC does and will continue to integrate AI into our software offerings. We

currently use predictive AI in our forecasting and dispatching software. We are also researching how to use generative AI in a few areas, including support, logistics and data integrity. It's a company-wide effort to stay up on technology and implement it when it's helpful to our products.

SUSAN PETERSON
RURAL COMPUTER CONSULTANTS
BIRD ISLAND, MINNESOTA

Yes, absolutely I would. As my software providers incorporate it into our programs, it promises to help with real-world problems like routing, demand forecasting and letter writing. Did anything in my answer seem off to you? I had ChatGPT write my response.

JULIE JOHNSON
TED JOHNSON PROPANE
BALDWIN PARK, CALIFORNIA

I would absolutely use AI for forecasting. I would be interested to see how accurate AI would be in forecasting compared to

how I usually do it. It seems like everyone is still out for that magic eight ball that can predict the next 12 months of revenue exactly.

SAM FUNG
EMERSON FISHER LP GAS
MCKINNEY, TEXAS

I'm intrigued by the possibilities that AI presents for society and particularly for managing information and data. To be able to train a "personal assistant" to gather and catalog information from the internet in real time while notifying me of significant discoveries (based on my definition of "significant") seems like it could be a game changer. One concern would be to make sure I am monitoring the impact AI is having on my overall health and well-being.

BRUCE SWIECICKI
NATIONAL PROPANE GAS ASSOCIATION
TINLEY PARK, ILLINOIS

I have just started using AI over the last couple of months, only because the

younger people in our organization gave me some clear guidance and direction. I certainly am a newcomer, but by just asking some very basic questions, it is clear to me that this will be a new tool that could revolutionize the way that we do business, as well as a lot of different tasks.

I learned this morning on a call with one of my customers that they are currently investigating using AI as a resource that will utilize cameras and photos to help with visual inspections for cylinders and underground tanks. I'm sure this is an excellent opportunity for the propane industry to utilize this new technology in many innovative ways. The Jetsons are finally here!

JERRY SCHIMMEL
P3 PROPANE SAFETY
CUMBERLAND, RHODE ISLAND

We are in the exploration stage of determining where AI will be beneficial to our business, as well as where we want to be cautious of potential consequences of using AI. The goal is to use AI to help with mundane or time-consuming tasks to allow our team to do work they find more fulfilling. We are excited to see what the future of AI is for our industry.

LAUREN CLARK
BERGQUIST INC.
TOLEDO, OHIO

A better question would be: Have I ever thought of going back to the rotary phone? That answer would be yes. Unfortunately, it will never happen. I guess the answering machine is artificial intelligence, so I believe the answer is yes. Is any computer artificial intelligence? If so, I am guilty of having it.

Not the easiest question to answer, but I would rather talk to a person, rather than a robot.

RICHARD STRYCHARZ, JR.
WALTER'S PROPANE
SUNDERLAND, MASSACHUSETTS

READY TO TAKE THE PLUNGE?

If you're in doubt about AI, some of these responses may nudge you toward an AI trial. For those already experimenting and using AI, the results seem to be worth the effort to learn a new technology. My understanding is that the key to successful AI implementation is to use specific prompts and inform AI as you would in talking to a person. AI will learn from its experience and continually improve over time.

Perhaps the next Verbatim column will be AI generated ... no way! 📌

Bring on the April Showers

American Standard's got you covered for all your cylinder storage needs.

ASM
The Cabinet Company

BUILT ON MORE THAN 30 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE.

Made in the USA

800.488.8816
amrstd.com



DELIVERED AND UNLOADED

by Metsa.



We manage lead times from 1-2 weeks

Visit us at booth:

401

40th 
Anniversary

**Come visit us at
the WPGA**

(Western Propane trade show and convention)

MAY 13-17 2024

At Reno events center Reno, Nevada

Quality

Service



1-800-609-TANK.

   **Metsa Tanks** sales@metsa.com



David Schlee is of counsel to The McCarthy Law Firm P.C. He may be reached at david@mokpclaw.com.

THE 'FIREFIGHTER'S RULE' & THE QUESTION OF LEGAL JUSTICE FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

A look back at a gas explosion lawsuit & what it means for firefighters today

The job of a firefighter presents many hazards. Among these hazards is the risk of injury or death in a gas explosion. February alone saw multiple examples:

- In Loudoun County, Virginia, firefighters responded to a residence after gas odors were reported in the area. While they were at the scene, a massive explosion destroyed the residence, injuring 12 firefighters and two residents. Tragically, another firefighter was killed. Investigators found a leaking 500-gallon underground propane tank on location at the house.
- In Los Angeles, firefighters responded to a reported truck fire. They were in the process of putting out the fire when a massive explosion destroyed the truck, injuring nine firefighters, two of them critically. Investigators found that the truck was powered by compressed natural gas, and that one of its two compressed natural gas tanks BLEVE'd (boiling liquid evaporating vapor explosion — an extremely powerful event) as a result of the heat from the fire.

- In Ann Arbor, Michigan, a propane explosion destroyed a house. A firefighter was injured while fighting the fire. Investigators discovered that the homeowner had rigged up propane cylinders (apparently inside the house) to provide heat after his natural gas service had been cut off.

It is not known whether the negligence or fault of anyone was the cause of these incidents. If it was, injured persons and the families of those who died as a result should be able to sue those at fault for damages. But not necessarily so in the case of firefighters, who might

be confronted with the professional rescuer doctrine, often known as the "Firefighter's Rule."

Under the Firefighter's Rule, emergency responders who are injured in an incident in the line of duty may not sue those whose negligence or fault caused the incident. The rule generally applies not only to firefighters, but also to police officers and emergency medical personnel. It may seem unfair, and many commentators agree.

The reasoning behind the rule is that emergency responders are well aware of the risks associated with their jobs, and they voluntarily assume those risks.

Under the Firefighter's Rule, emergency responders who are injured in an incident in the line of duty may not sue those whose negligence or fault caused the incident ... [because] emergency responders are well aware of the risks associated with their jobs.



Those who defend the rule also point out that emergency responders are adequately compensated by workers' compensation, sick leave and disability programs paid for by taxpayers (this may or may not be true). They also note that citizens may be discouraged from calling for help if they believe they may be subject to liability.

It is important to remember, however, that this is one of those areas where the law can vary from state to state. Not all states follow the rule, and others have limited its application and have carved out exceptions. However, a decision of the Washington Court of Appeals in a recent natural gas explosion case — originally reported in BPN's December 2019 issue — illustrates how the doctrine works in that state. The case is *Markoff v. Puget Sound Energy*.

LIVE GAS LINE

On March 9, 2016, the Seattle Fire Department received a 911 telephone call reporting a natural gas leak. Nine firefighters arrived on the scene at 1:09 a.m. and notified the natural gas utility Puget Sound Energy (PSE) of the leak at

1:11 a.m. PSE did not take action to shut off the pipeline that was the source of the leak until much later.

After notifying PSE of the leak's existence, the firefighters inspected a narrow passageway between two buildings and determined that the gas was escaping into the air from a threaded coupling along a steel service line attached to one of the buildings. The firefighters were unaware that gas had also escaped into and underneath this building. As the firefighters continued investigating, an unknown source ignited the gas in the building at 1:43 a.m., causing an explosion that leveled both buildings and injured the firefighters.

Subsequent investigation revealed two things. First, the gas line that had leaked was supposed to have been decommissioned in 2004. A contractor had been hired by PSE to cut and cap that line. It failed to do so, and the line was live and still charged with gas 12 years later in 2016. Second, the actual leak in the line was caused by the storage of personal items in the narrow space between the two buildings by individuals who lived in the area.

LAWSUIT

Jeffrey Markoff, one of the injured firefighters, sued PSE and the contractor for negligence and intentional misconduct in leaving the gas line in question charged with gas. PSE moved to dismiss based on the professional rescuer doctrine, and the trial court granted that motion. Markoff appealed.

The appellate court thoroughly discussed the rationale behind the professional rescuer doctrine:

"The general rule in Washington is that a person who is injured while rescuing another may recover from the party whose negligence created the need for rescue. However, because professional rescuers assume certain risks as part of their profession, the general rule does not apply. When a professional rescuer is injured by a known hazard associated with a particular rescue activity, the rescuer may not recover from the party whose negligence caused the rescuer's presence at the scene."

HIDDEN DANGERS

The court did, however, note that there is an exception to this rule "when a

professional rescuer is injured by a hidden, unknown or extra-hazardous danger that is not inherently associated with the particular rescue activity.” Markoff invoked this exception, arguing that the firefighters did not know of PSE’s and its contractor’s negligence and that gas leaks had previously been reported in the same area.

In addition, they claimed, the firefighters had no knowledge that gas was escaping not only into the alley where they could perceive it, but also into an underground space beneath the building. Finally, they argued that PSE’s alleged negligence in failing to deactivate the line between 1:11 a.m., when it was notified of the leak, and 1:43 a.m., when the explosion occurred, created an additional unforeseeable risk.

INHERENT RISKS

The appellate court rejected these specific arguments:

“The firefighters do not allege facts indicating that they would have responded differently to the leak than they did had they known of the improper cutting and capping of the line or the previous reports of gas leaks. Nor do they allege that they would have responded differently had they known of the pooling of gas underneath the ... building.

“All of the dangers created by the past negligence of PSE and its contractors, created by those who misused the narrow space between the buildings, and of the gas leaking into an underground space, were part of the same hazard that the firefighters were called to the scene to address: a gas leak.

“Injury from a fire or explosion is a risk inherent in addressing a natural gas leak, given that natural gas is known to be volatile and highly explosive. The firefighters do not show that the circumstances of this leak created a ‘new or unknown risk’ of a type not inherent in

the danger of responding to a natural gas leak.

“The hazards faced by the firefighters, while significant, were inherent in the risks associated with responding to a natural gas leak. The trial court correctly applied the professional rescuer doctrine in dismissing all of the firefighters’ common law tort claims.”

Whether the Firefighter’s Rule can be invoked in the recent tragic incidents in Virginia, California and Michigan is unclear. But the Markoff case offers a clear application of the rule in the state of Washington to defeat the claim of an injured firefighter. Since our 2019 article discussing the case, the Washington Supreme Court denied review in 2020, letting the Court of Appeals decision stand as final; and in 2022, the Court of Appeals applied the professional rescuer doctrine to dismiss the claim of a sheriff’s deputy killed in the line of duty. 📌

ANOVA

Connecting the industrial world—for better.



2023 IoT Analytics Platform of the Year
2022 IIoT Innovator of the Year



2022 Operations & Distribution Category Winner
2021 Business Improvement Category Winner

TRUSTED REMOTE TANK MONITORING SOLUTIONS

UNIFY YOUR PROPANE OPERATION

ANOVA UTM®

UNIVERSAL SIM WITH MULTI CARRIER CAPABILITY

- / TWO TANKS
- / EASY TO INSTALL
- / GPS POSITIONING
- / MULTIPLE SENSORS
- / OVER THE AIR UPDATES
- / WORKS WITH ALL TANKS AND SOFTWARE

ONE MONITOR, MULTIPLE APPLICATIONS



+1 866 493 7762 / enquiry@anova.com

   anovasolutions / anova.com

CONTACT US TODAY

Learn about our award-winning Anova remote tank monitoring solutions.

<https://pages.anova.com/bpn-p>



THE PERFECT SOLUTION FOR YOUR DISPENSER, BOBTAIL AND PLANT APPLICATIONS.



Benchmark for quality and longevity.

PERFORMANCE CHARACTERISTICS

- Cold and hot climate flexibility.
- Higher flow rate.
- No delamination,
Cover - Seamlessly extruded.
- High UV and abrasion resistant cover.

- Hose assemblies available in sizes ½" to 2".

The Elaflex range of hoses leads to lower maintenance and downtime costs.



Contact our distributors
elaflex.com.au/contact/distributors-gasguard-products



Taylor Finley is a recent college graduate who has a passion for design, creativity and serving others. She received her bachelor's degree in graphic design from Liberty University. In her free time, she enjoys spending time with her dog, friends and family. She is a proud ambassador for the Foster Foundation, an organization dedicated to helping those in need.

PHILANTHROPY & ITS EFFECT ON COMPANY CULTURE

Explore the transformative journey of a company's dedication to philanthropy, community service & employee well-being

Note From the Editor: We often hear about the most effective business strategies for building a successful propane company, but how often do we think about initiatives that exist alongside and in harmony with everyday business practices? Philanthropy is one of those initiatives that allows you and your employees to give back to those in need. Fostering goodwill with your community is, of course, great for your business's legacy, but it also signifies to your employees that you have a culture of caring about the good of the community beyond your company's bottom line. Ahead, learn about the Foster Foundation, Foster Fuels' philanthropic arm — what it grew out of, how it's impacting both the surrounding community and the employees within the business, and why this could be a meaningful addition to your company's workplace culture.

Over 100 years ago, L.H. Foster began Foster Fuels and delivered flour, ice and lamp oil to his local community. This fourth-generation, family-owned and -operated company now employs over 250 individuals with propane service at the heart of its central Virginia operations. As Foster Fuels has grown, so has the company's desire to help those who are going through devastating times.

In 2003, Foster Fuels began the Mission Critical initiative, a division designed to respond to natural disasters and offer relief to affected areas. Since then, Mission Critical has grown into a large part of the company, providing

services nationwide and internationally. In 2017, CEO Watt Foster and President Will Rohrig deployed to Puerto Rico with the Mission Critical team following the devastation of Hurricane Maria. This immersive experience gave Watt a deeper understanding of those in need. He and his wife Jennifer began researching options on how to help those in their own market area. In 2018, they developed the Foster Foundation with the mission to support the efforts of local organizations

that share the company's vision of a community where all citizens can thrive.

Jennifer began oversight of all philanthropic endeavors of the Foundation. With a specific desire to improve the lives of children, she began collecting used coats from friends and family to donate to those in need. An initiative that started with only a few coats has grown into a massive, months-long campaign designed to acquire, launder and distribute gently used coats



Foster Fuels' Spread the Warmth campaign collects and distributes coats to those who need them in the colder months.



Foster Fuels employees bundled up for the Coldest Night of the Year fundraiser, which raises awareness and funds for homelessness.

to those who need them. Last winter, the Spread the Warmth campaign distributed over 6,000 coats through social services, schools and nonprofits.

The Foundation also sponsors many philanthropic initiatives hosted by like-minded organizations and encourages Foster Fuels employees to be involved. By highlighting volunteer opportunities, employers can make it easier for staff to find appealing and accessible options. It's not all about financial donations; there are many ways people can give back. A strong culture of community service began to quickly develop. Employee efforts were recognized and highlighted in the monthly newsletter, which built volunteerism as a shared company focus.

To further increase engagement, Foster Fuels began offering a floating paid volunteer day. All Foster employees are now granted the option to replace a day at the office with a day of volunteering. Employees can also enter volunteer hours in Mobile Serve, a tracking platform. Once an employee reaches 100 hours, Foster Fuels will donate up to \$1,000 to that employee's preferred non-profit. As a result, volunteering has skyrocketed, and many employees have stated they look forward to such opportunities.



Foster Fuels employees are always willing to volunteer their time and efforts to better their community.

Aemee Garner, a Foster Fuels customer service representative, says, "Having the support and resources from my employer amplifies my desire to give back to those in need. Here I can fully utilize my desire to help others."

The company is equally dedicated to its employees and their families. The cost of higher education in the United States has increased 180% since 1980, creating a hardship for many desiring a higher education. Foster Fuels offers a scholarship program for employees and their dependents, which can be applied to a four-year undergraduate program, trade school or certification course. Churches and schools attended by employees and their immediate families also receive annual financial donations.

Winston Churchill once said, "You make a living by what you get; you make a life by what you give."

Lindie Honsberger, vice president of propane service, has seen the propane division flourish and believes that the organization's dedication to philanthropy plays a large role in its success. Watt, Jennifer and the Foster family have proven that incorporating philanthropy into company culture makes a huge difference in the environment of a workplace.

Values clearly shared between management and non-management strengthen the company's unity and cohesion and will carry forward beyond employees to their dependents and the community at large. 🍂



IMPROVING SAFETY & EFFICIENCY

One-Tank's innovative approach to transforming distribution & growth

In the world of propane service and safety, few moments are as heart-stopping for a marketer as receiving the call that Rick Humphrey will never forget. It's a harsh reminder that in the blink of an eye, reputations can be questioned, and a single incident can leave a scar on a company's conscience.

Our story begins on a seemingly ordinary morning at the district office, when Humphrey picked up a call that would change the course of his career. On the line was an elderly lady from near Big Bear, California, reporting a gas smell in her home. With quick thinking, Humphrey asked if she had a safe place to evacuate to. She mentioned her daughter's nearby house. Then the line went silent.

Humphrey and his team raced toward her location, overtaken en route by an ambulance and a firetruck heading in the same direction. They arrived to discover a heart-wrenching scene: The grandmother had been in a dark house, and upon her granddaughter's arrival and the innocent flick of a light switch, an explosion was sparked.

Determined to prevent such tragedies in the future, he embarked on a mission to pioneer a solution that would change lives and businesses.

Conquering Supply Shortages: How One-Tank & SkyTracker Revolutionize Inventory Management

Building on Rick Humphrey's innovations, the company faced another formidable industry challenge: The cyclical supply shortages that haunted marketers season after season. Triggered by a mix of inclement weather, fluctuating pipeline ratios, soaring export demands and lengthy terminal lines, these shortages became a recurring nightmare. Will-call customers, who typically represent about 40% of most marketers' customer base, were significantly affected — a situation exacerbated by the winter shortages of 2013-2014.

Brian Humphrey, inspired by the proactive approach of

his father, devised a solution and introduced One-Tank with the dual purpose of addressing the immediate issue of supply shortages and providing a sustainable model to mitigate future risks.

One-Tank transformed the way marketers viewed and managed their inventory by focusing on operational efficiency. It offered a way to convert what was once seen as mere steel into an operational asset under the marketer's control.

Empowering Propane Businesses With One-Tank: A Leap Toward Efficiency & Customer Satisfaction

A recent survey by One-Tank revealed that 69% of propane marketers across the United States have less than a quarter of their tanks monitored, while only 20% monitor over half. This shows a significant opportunity for marketers to strengthen and expand their customer base by adopting



modern, easy-to-use tank monitoring technology to leverage competitive advantage, as well as improve operational efficiency and customer service.

Blakeman Propane in Wyoming switched to One-Tank after facing issues with their previous monitoring system. They reported major improvements in operational reliability and user-friendliness.

“We use it as a selling tool. People love to be able to look at their phone and see the percentage in the tank,” said Dean Skiver.

Clark Propane Plus in Kentucky experienced similar benefits after testing One-Tank, including reduced diesel costs and enhanced delivery efficiency. Their customers appreciated the ability to monitor tank levels through an app, prompting the company to consider monthly billing.

“This product cuts your cost for diesel fuel and makes you so much more efficient on deliveries. My customers love getting an app for their phone or computer so they can monitor their tanks,” said Manager Dewayne Carpenter.

Revolutionizing Propane Tank Monitoring: The SkyTracker Omega Series

Finding a tank monitoring solution that is high quality, affordable and scalable was nearly impossible — until now. Now the new SkyTracker Omega product series puts simple, affordable and reliable satellite tank monitoring in reach.

Uncompromised Safety for Peace of Mind

Safety is at the core of the SkyTracker Omega series, featuring advanced text/email alert systems for gas leaks and stuck float gauge detection, alongside the myriad advantages of virtual metering. Omega delivers not only efficiency, but the safety of your operations and assets.

Effortless Installation for Immediate Use

Gone are the days of laborious installations. The SkyTracker Omega is designed for instant plug-and-play use, providing a hassle-free setup process. Just connect, configure and start monitoring your tanks with unparalleled ease.

Affordability Without Compromise

One-Tank set out to make satellite tank monitoring accessible to all, and the SkyTracker Omega series accomplishes that vision. Enjoy the benefits of advanced monitoring without the hefty price tag.



Reliability You Can Count On

Affordable doesn't mean cheap in quality. The Omega series stands as the most cost-effective satellite monitoring solution without skimping on reliability. Crafted for long-term durability, these monitors deliver consistent and accurate tank monitoring, offering peace of mind.

Global Coverage for Universal Peace of Mind

With the SkyTracker Omega, geographical boundaries are no longer a concern. Our global coverage guarantees that regardless of where your tanks are, they remain within our monitoring realm, ensuring safety and efficiency across the board.

Support That Makes a Difference

The Omega series is backed by unparalleled support from the knowledgeable, friendly customer service team based in the U.S. Assistance is just a call or click away.

Transform Your Business With SkyTracker Omega

Discover how our comprehensive, proven solution can revolutionize your operations, giving you a competitive edge with a larger, more satisfied and profitable customer base.

Ready to Make the Switch?

Learn how at one-tank.com and join the ranks of businesses setting new standards in a new era for propane tank monitoring.

CALIFORNIA POLICY MATTERS — EVEN IF YOU DON'T WANT IT TO

How the Golden State's regulations set the standard for the rest of the country

BY COLIN SUEYRES



MEHANIQ41-ADOBE STOCK

"You're welcome for the iPhone ... and we're sorry about everything else."

I've started several conversations with colleagues from outside California this way. It is a fun reminder of the state's reputation for innovation and economic growth, and a grim reminder of its policies for millions of Americans outside its borders. As a sixth-generation resident of the Golden State who has spent most of his life in public service to it, I would like to believe the truth lies somewhere in between.

For the propane industry, however, the state's future will define the industry's future for good or ill.

BELLWETHER OF THE FUTURE

California was the economic powerhouse of the United States in the post-war economy. Its manufacturing, technology, entertainment, agriculture, oil and gas, and aerospace industries — to name just a sampling — built the state into the juggernaut that is, by most metrics, either the fourth- or fifth-largest economy in the world today. Forty million residents call California home, and its geographic diversity ranges from the sunny beaches of Southern California to the snowy mountaintops of the Sierra Nevada range.

California has been on the bleeding edge of the political, cultural and

industrial zeitgeist for decades. Ronald Reagan mounted successful campaigns for governor and then president long before people could imagine a celebrity in those positions. California's highway system was one of the models used by President Eisenhower for building the national interstate system. The first flight may have been at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, but California aerospace businesses like Lockheed, Douglas and Northrup helped the country win World War II, provided for the Jet Age of travel and put human beings on the moon.

The zeitgeist cuts both ways, however. The Free Speech Movement in Berkeley

and Summer of Love in San Francisco ushered in the national counterculture and hippie movement. The booms and busts of the tech economy incentivized businesses to invest outside of the U.S. and avoid keeping too many eggs in one geographic basket for the workforce.

And, importantly for our industry, complaints of smog spouting from Southern California traffic jams created the California Air Resources Board (CARB), and an oil spill off the coast of Santa Barbara in 1969 created the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). They pushed the modern environmental movement from the fringe and into the mainstream of American life.

It's also worth noting that it was Californians — Governor Reagan in 1967 and President Richard Nixon in 1970 — who created those respective governmental agencies.

THE CALIFORNIA CARVE-OUT

The creation of CARB matters a great deal because it was that creation that would eventually lead to national emission reduction mandates, increased fuel efficiency standards and more. But how could a state agency drive national energy policy? The Clean Air Act (CAA) established the federal government as the primary driver of emissions policy, and other environmental standards related to combustion are codified through the EPA.

Due to California's unique air quality concerns, the creation of CARB and emission standards that predated enactment of federal standards, and the desire by California-elected officials — including Reagan and Nixon — to “protect” their state, California is allowed by federal statute in Section 209 of the CAA to request higher standards than what would be allowed by federal regulation. If the EPA administrator approves that waiver request, California can hold manufacturers, dealers and consumers to higher emissions and efficiency standards.

This is the California waiver process — and the single-most important reason

California is the trendsetter on vehicle policy. Once California establishes a standard and receives a waiver, any other state may adopt its rule language. Per Section 177 of CAA, 42 U.S.C. § 7507:

“Any State ... may adopt and enforce for any model year standards relating to control of emissions from new motor vehicles or new motor vehicle engines ... if:

(1) such standards are identical to the California standards for which a waiver has been granted for such model year, and

(2) California and such State adopt such standards at least two years before commencement of such model year (as determined by regulations of the Administrator).”

So far, more than 17 states have adopted one of California's many approved waivers over the years. These smaller states also have the benefit of coordinating with colleagues from California on how best to adopt these rules. CARB has a staff of approximately 1,700 individuals and is rivaled only by the EPA in its size, scope and technical sophistication. When a state wants to adopt a regulation, they will reach out to California before the federal government and seek their assistance. We are seeing that now as states adopt cap-and-trade or clean fuels programs like those implemented in California.

But a state adopting the California standard is only one factor that drives the national energy conversation.

MARKET FORCES & THE POWER OF CONSUMER TRENDS

California is home to 40 million people. Nearly one in eight Americans live within its borders. It has a boundless diversity of races, ethnicities, countries of origin, socioeconomic statuses — you name the demographic, and California has a sizable percentage of that population. For organizations seeking to use California's policies for their own ends, that is a prime feature for seeking action.

The waiver process allows California to set its own market for goods. That means manufacturers must build vehicles and

While California can ... seem like a joke ... the reality is that its policies ... are already affecting your lives whether you realize it or not.

machinery that comply with California's more rigorous environmental standards. If a relatively small state tried to leverage their market for goods and services, a manufacturer could, hypothetically, make the hard decision to not sell within that jurisdiction rather than go through the agony of meeting compliance.

The California market is so large and so critical to just about every global manufacturer that companies will bend to California rules rather than abandon the market. Appointees to CARB will even comment from the dais that they are taking votes on particular policies to “send hard market signals” to those building and selling products in the state. The result is that there can be vehicles certified in 49 other states that cannot be legally driven within California.

Market forces are not bound to just California, however. Electric and hybrid vehicles, heavily subsidized by California and supported by its regulatory policies, began to sell within California's market. After more than a decade of such support, those companies began to develop economies of scale and bring down their prices, make their technology more attractive to non-California consumers, and expand the footprint of their sales to a national audience.

Once a company has taken the time and energy to develop equipment for the California market, it becomes much more attractive over time to find other markets for that equipment — even when government regulation does not mandate its use! All you need to do is watch TV or

the internet for ads of electric vehicles to understand that market forces will go anywhere there is a dollar to be made.

AVOID GETTING CAUGHT FLAT-FOOTED

The reason why these two forces matter — government mandates from one side and market forces from the other — is that they can snare the propane industry in their pincers if we are not prepared. The on-road segment was the first to fall, with light-duty manufacturers, convenience stores and many others having to rapidly evolve to limited success. However, California has now set its sights on off-road segments like forklifts and drayage fleets, while it continues to underwrite the costs of electric school buses to subsidize that market.

In a worst-case scenario, the exported technologies mandated by the California market will create competition in

markets that we've never previously worried about before and put the industry at a disadvantage in a way we have never previously had to consider.

If you are not prepared for these shifts, you will be at a competitive disadvantage when your state does consider adopting a California-style regulation. The headaches in Washington state after the adoption of their cap-and-invest program were so heavy that there are currently multiple efforts to attempt to wind back its impacts, all while keeping the program going.

Likewise, compliance costs money. If you are a smaller business owner, you can likely not afford to invest in front-office staff that can be dedicated toward government compliance or regulations. Luckily, trade organizations like the Western and National Propane Gas Associations exist and can help, but we cannot work for your company alone. Joining these associations and learning

about what is happening in real time can allow you to adapt early and get engaged before compliance becomes fatal.

While California can certainly seem like a joke from afar, the reality is that its policies, market and consumer choices are already affecting your lives whether you realize it or not. Understanding what the state is trying to do and how it uses its power and influence is one of the best ways for our industry to get ahead of the curve of governmental regulation rather than behind it. ■

Colin Sueyres serves as the president and CEO of the Western Propane Association, which represents the propane industry throughout California. Sueyres has over two decades of management and public affairs experience, including extensive work in the fields of energy, water and natural resources.



IPS

A family of solutions
for the propane industry

800-621-4137
www.whyips.com

REGO **EMPIRE** **Blackmer** **LIQUID CONTROLS** **Jomar VALVE** **RED SEAL MEASUREMENT** **MOPEKA** **Hannay Reels** **QUALITY STEEL** **WORTHINGTON INDUSTRIES**

Start checking off the boxes on your dream list.

If you're thinking about getting out from behind the desk and in front of your retirement dreams, now is the perfect time to start a dialogue with Suburban Propane. With over 95 years in the propane industry, we have extensive M&A experience and a successful track record in multiple states. We welcome your employees into our family, and continue to provide your valued customers with the same safe, exceptional service they've come to expect.

Let's turn your dreams into reality. Contact us today!

Ryan Melone, Corporate Development
RMelone@suburbanpropane.com
(973) 503-9211

Retirement To-Do List:

- ☐ Visit the grandkids
- ☐ Travel more
- ☐ Plant a garden
- ☐ Volunteer
- ☐ Learn to play pickleball
- ☒ Call Ryan at Suburban Propane



 Learn More

**Suburban
Propane®**

THE SECRET TO THE SUCCESSFUL GRAND OPENING OF A NEW LOCATION

Maximize community engagement, media outreach & event planning for grand openings that leave a lasting impression

BY KIRSTEN MCALPIN

The grand opening — or re-grand opening — of a new location is an exciting time for a propane company and community. It marks a fresh start with new beginnings and new chances to reach existing and potential customers. At Conger LP Gas, we have successfully executed grand openings in the last several years. We opened our flagship Tifton, Georgia, home office in 2018; a new office in Moultrie, Georgia, in 2021; and just recently, in February 2024, moved and reopened a new office in Sylvester, Georgia. Along the way, we have learned some valuable tips and tricks to make a grand opening event successful and fun for everyone, including your employees.

One of the most valuable pieces of advice is to consider joining your local chamber of commerce and including a ribbon cutting as part of your grand opening celebration. A ribbon cutting is a fantastic opportunity to have local government leaders, fellow business owners and chamber ambassadors as a built-in audience. Plus, the chamber of commerce will advertise the ribbon cutting and your business free of charge to their email database and social media followers. In most cases, ribbon cuttings are free for new members, making it a win-win for your business!

It is then time to start deciding how you will spread the word about your event. Start by examining your local community and determining what media



Tifton Grand Opening

outlets are popular in your area. This could include radio stations, television outlets and newspapers. A great way to find out this information is to ask people in your circle of friends, family or your current customers. Do not hesitate to ask the media sales representative about their listenership/readership and coverage area, as they often have that information ready and available for potential clients.

Also, do not forget to use social media to your full advantage. You do not have to spend a lot of money on Facebook and Instagram advertising for it to be effective. I recommend starting on the smaller side when you boost a post and reanalyze what works in weekly increments. You can always adjust your advertising spend and budget on social

media once you see what people are responding to. Direct mailing is another excellent way to advertise your event, and it can be done internally or through an online vendor. You can send direct mail to your current customer list if you are doing a re-grand opening or to potential new customers by choosing zip codes or a radius around your new location to send the advertisements to.

Once you have selected your date and have an idea of how you will advertise, it is time to plan the details of your event. Consider what your community and customers would be interested in and what would draw people in. At Conger LP Gas, we have found that offering a special deal for filling cylinders always attracts a crowd. For example, at the Sylvester grand opening, we filled 20-pound



Moultrie Grand Opening



McAlpin with President and CEO Dan Richardson at the Sylvester Grand Opening



Sylvester Grand Opening



Sylvester Grand Opening

cylinders for \$10 over our two-day re-grand opening celebration. People showed up with truckloads of cylinders, as we had no limit on how many cylinders people could bring in. Another aspect that always rallies a crowd is food. Offering a free lunch to people who come to your grand opening is an excellent incentive for people to stop by and see your new location. You can do something as simple as hot dogs and chips or go all out and have your event catered.

Giveaways are another great way to get people excited about your event. I recommend reaching out to the vendors from whom you purchase merchandise for your store and seeing if they have anything they would be willing to donate or offer at a discounted rate for the grand opening. There are many different large ticket door prizes to choose from, and some popular ones we have found are gas grills, coolers and tickets to various amusements. If you have something in your showroom that you need to move through inventory, this is another excellent way to use it. You simply need

a signup box and some slips of paper for people to sign up to win — plus you get their name, email and phone number to use for future marketing efforts.

To pair with the large door prizes, having some sort of swag available with your business logo and a form of contact information like your website or phone number is a good idea. Our signature items at Conger LP Gas are potholders, hats, pizza cutters, basting brushes and rain gauges. To ensure you do not go through the items quickly, I recommend purchasing a prize wheel and having guests spin the wheel to win a prize. It keeps people from picking up everything they see and depleting your prize inventory, and people enjoy doing it.

Be sure you post about your event on social media throughout the day so people thinking about visiting your new location will be further enticed to go. Ensure you have someone designated to take photographs of your event throughout the day, even if that means hiring a photographer. These photos will be great to have not only to look back on

but also to use on your website and social media in the future. Speaking of photos, I have recently started renting a digital photo booth for larger events, which has become a popular addition. People have a lot of fun taking pictures, but again, you also capture their information when they send the photo to themselves.

After all the planning and setup, the fun part begins. On the day of the event, be sure to take in everything and really recognize your employees' hard work and the support you garner from the community. A grand opening can be daunting, but it means your company is growing — which is a definite reason to celebrate! 🍷

Kirsten McAlpin is the director of marketing and public relations for Conger LP Gas. She is a Ph.D. in communication student at Liberty University and holds a Master of Science in integrated marketing communications from West Virginia University. McAlpin is the current communications and marketing chair for Women in Propane.



TerraVest INDUSTRIES

One Source, Many Solutions.



See you soon!

You can find TerraVest Industries and our family of brands at the upcoming WPGA show on 5/13 - 5/17 in Reno, NV. Stop by our booth where we'll have plenty of equipment for you to check out, like our transports, crane trucks, and domestic tanks. Our team looks forward to helping you with your compressed gas transport and storage equipment needs!

WPGA on 5/13 - 5/17 in Reno, NV

Contact us at **855-477-9828** or visit us at terravestlpg.com to learn more.

TerraVest
INDUSTRIES

TerraVest
TANKS

Signature
TRUCK SYSTEMS



Maxfield

pro-par



LEADING THE COMPRESSED GAS INDUSTRY

For over 70 years, Mississippi Tank Company has been engineering and building transport trailers in-house for various types of compressed gasses including propane, nitrogen, chlorine, helium, CO₂, and NH₃. Are you looking for a highly customizable solution? Give us a call and our experienced engineering staff will design a unit for your individual needs or we can build to your specifications.

Mississippi Tank Company HQ:
3000 W 7th St, Hattiesburg, MS 39401

855-477-9828
mstank.com

TerraVest
INDUSTRIES

A TerraVest Industries Company



THE STATE OF AUTOGAS IN UKRAINE & BEYOND

European experts give a snapshot of the LPG market & the versatility of the fuel amid ever-changing complications

BY CINCH MUNSON

It has now been more than two years since Russia invaded Ukraine, resulting in the displacement of millions of Ukrainians and thousands of deaths. The conflict is also changing the liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) market, both within the borders of Ukraine and in the broader European economy.

Ahead, European LPG business operators and marketers share their thoughts on the current shape of the Ukrainian autogas market and the ripple effects the conflict is causing in surrounding countries. Alexander Pokormiako, owner and technical director at ProGas Alternative Fuels Center in Kyiv, Ukraine, and Mikhail Shuban, an LPG marketer based in Ukraine, provide an overview of the innovations and advantages of LPG as a fuel source amid the challenges facing the industry in war-torn Ukraine.



A Look at the Ukrainian Market

Pokormiako: This year marks 20 years since I started working in the LPG business. This industry continues to amaze me with its ongoing various discoveries, challenges and its unexpected achievements.

As it often happens, my professional journey began quite accidentally. In 2002, my car was converted, and I personally fine-tuned it to acceptable standards. This experience inspired me to start my own business, which I have been engaged in for 20 years now, implementing various solutions for the use of alternative fuels in everyday life.

My work involves developing technical solutions, diagnosing and solving problems, fine-tuning fuel equipment, and creating specialized content on social media. The aim of this activity is to cultivate a culture of service consumption, informing end-users about the real advantages and disadvantages of each solution.

As a result, in Ukraine, a very positive and realistic reputation has been formed for alternative fuels, even in the face of large-scale military actions due to Russian aggression.

The name of my business — ProGas Alternative Fuels Center — was not chosen by chance. Over time, it became clear that there is no strict attachment to one type of fuel for a specific engine. We can combine, blend and achieve incredible results. For example, we are converting gasoline engines with the latest injection systems to use LPG and achieving characteristics identical to gasoline — and sometimes even higher.

Autogas in Ukraine

Ukraine stands as an extraordinary country, characterized by a tapestry of contradictions and unique conditions for development. Within this dynamic landscape, the evolution of LPG use in vehicles unfolds as a compelling narrative. From the stifling bureaucracy of the 1990s to a liberalized market where



A car is refueling at a European LPG station.

certification procedures now take mere hours, the journey of LPG development in Ukraine is one of perseverance and innovation.

My path in the LPG business was intricate and unpredictable. Various schemes and equipment were experimented with, complex research conducted and methodologies developed to ensure maximum compatibility of gas systems. There were many difficulties and challenges to overcome in the early days of this endeavor, including combustion properties research, engine mechanics, electronics and diagnostic techniques with a total absence of a systemized library where necessary knowledge could be obtained. I had to collect the data and knowledge in small portions, bit by bit.

This dedication paid off, leading to the successful retrofitting of cutting-edge vehicles imported from different continents to run on LPG. What seemed unfeasible just five years ago is now a reality in 2024.

The advancements in automotive engineering and technology have shed light on the efficiency of LPG compared to traditional gasoline engines. With its high-octane rating, perfect mixability and clean combustion, LPG has proven to be a more efficient option. Over the past two years, developers and manufacturers of gas equipment have refined LPG gas

injection technology to an almost perfect status.

Despite adversities such as wide-scale war and regional obstacles, the development of alternative fuels in Ukraine persists. Liquefied petroleum gas emerged as the first choice in the market during a fuel crisis when fuel depots were destroyed amid Russian attacks. Electric vehicles relying on diesel generators for charging suffered the most. Over the course of a severe fuel crisis that lasted for eight months, many — including myself — relied solely on LPG, highlighting its reliability even in tumultuous times.

Furthermore, LPG boasts superior safety characteristics, with ease of storage and transport, stability at various temperatures, and minimal risk of soil and water contamination. The ability to remotely convert models from the U.S. market to run on LPG underscores its adaptability and efficiency. This streamlined process hints at further advancements and widespread adoption of LPG as a viable alternative fuel option.

Active engagement in social media has been key for dispelling misconceptions and showcasing the benefits of LPG. Clients now view installing gas equipment as an investment, knowing that modern approaches make gas usage seamless, all without loss of power, errors or noticeable odors.

However, these advancements weren't achieved overnight. They evolved as complex questions, and problems were tackled step by step. Through perseverance, our work has been elevated to a new level, and it's this experience that I share with you. The journey of LPG development in Ukraine serves as a testament to the power of innovation and resilience in overcoming challenges, inspiring other nations to embrace alternative fuels and transition toward a more sustainable future.

Shuban: The wholesale LPG market in Ukraine continues its transformation. At the onset of the war, there was a 100% change in supply chains and logistics of imports. Prior to the conflict, the majority of the LPG in Ukraine came from Belarus. Since last autumn, blockades at the Polish-Ukrainian border, which intensified recently, blocked not only road transport but also railways, which is important since most LPG is supplied by rail.

Another problematic issue in the market now is the supply of Russian resources through third countries

LPG Consumption Market Statistics	
Poland – 2,495k tonnes	Agriculture – 1,043k tonnes
Domestic – 240k tonnes	Industry – 3,853k tonnes
Agriculture – 125k tonnes	Transport – 15,059k tonnes
Industry – 250k tonnes	Refinery – 2,103k tonnes
Transport – 1,880k tonnes	Chemical – 18,882k tonnes
Refinery – 0	
Chemical – 0	
Ukraine – 1,175k tonnes	United States – 46,550k tonnes
Domestic – 55k tonnes	Domestic – 15,166k tonnes
Agriculture – 130k tonnes	Agriculture – 1,552k tonnes
Industry – 45k tonnes	Industry – 1,982k tonnes
Transport – 930k tonnes	Transport – 189k tonnes
Refinery – 0	Refinery – 14,456k tonnes
Chemical – 15k tonnes	Chemical – 13,205k tonnes
Europe & Eurasia – 49,323k tonnes	Global – 341,752k tonnes
Domestic – 8,382k tonnes	Domestic – 154,123k tonnes
	Agriculture – 3,360k tonnes
	Industry – 23,591k tonnes
	Transport – 25,452k tonnes
	Refinery – 42,935k tonnes
	Chemical – 92,291k tonnes

and the replacement of certificate of origin documents. The 12th package of European Union sanctions, which will come into full effect at the end of the year for LPG, should significantly address this issue.

Due to the issues mentioned above, wholesale LPG prices have reached their

peak prices. In February 2024, at the Ukrainian producers auction, the price of LPG almost reached 50,000 Ukrainian hryvnia per ton (US\$1,300).

Despite the challenges, the people behind the LPG industry in Ukraine persevere and continue to work and fill the market.



A look under the hood of a Ukrainian vehicle with an engine that has been converted to autogas.

A VIEW OF THE EUROPEAN AUTOGAS MARKET

Angelique Berden, marketing and communications director at the Netherlands-based Prins Alternative Fuels Systems, and Bartosz Kwiatkowski, director general with the Polish Liquid Gas Association, responded to a line of questions about the conditions and outlook of the larger European autogas market. See their responses below.

Can you provide an overview of the European autogas market?

Berden: Autogas is the most popular alternative fuel for vehicles. It is the most affordable option, at about 50% of the cost of petrol, and it is more environmentally friendly than petrol and diesel with up to 21% less CO₂ emissions and 95% less particulate emissions. Plus, autogas is readily available, and the technology is there for new cars and for cars already on the road.

The European autogas market is a well-established market that has been active since the 1950s. The sector has survived through changing regulations, safety standards and incentive policies. Autogas is a proven solution that benefits consumers and enterprises for their sustainable performance.

Kwiatkowski: According to the European Automobile Manufacturers Association, 2.5% of passenger cars registered in the EU are powered by autogas, which is on par with hybrid electric vehicles and three times more than battery electric vehicles. This volume is largely driven by two member states, Poland and Italy, which account for about 6 million autogas vehicles between them.

The autogas market in Poland is significant. Can you put it into context? How has the conflict in Ukraine impacted the Polish autogas market?

Kwiatkowski: The transportation sector in Poland is responsible for 75% of total domestic LPG consumption, so it is a very important market. There are about 3.4 million registered autogas passenger cars

in Poland, which includes about 800,000 vehicles that do not have valid insurance, so we assume they are not on the road.

This accounts for about 13% of all passenger vehicles in Poland. More than 80% of the fuel stations in Poland sell autogas, and it is worth noting that the introduction of regulations allowing for self-service refueling was a turning point in the adoption of autogas in Poland.

It is also worth noting that the Polish automotive fleet is among the oldest in Europe. Secondhand cars brought from Western Europe account for most new registrations. Automotive vendors rarely offer new vehicles equipped with gas installations — a notable exception is Renault/Dacia — so many of these [imported] cars are converted to autogas. The autogas industry in Poland grew from scratch from domestic small- and medium-sized enterprises developing their technologies in the 1990s on the basis of Dutch and Italian expertise. Since then, these Polish enterprises have gone global.

Prior to the Russian invasion, the Ukrainian autogas market was similar to the Polish market in size with very similar drivers of growth over the past 20 years — particularly the availability and affordability of autogas — as well as similar challenges with disposable incomes. However, according to our estimates, since 2022, as many as 1 million autogas-powered vehicles have relocated from Ukraine to Poland.

What is your outlook for the autogas sector?

Kwiatkowski: A new phenomenon in Poland is the growing popularity of autogas-powered hybrid electric vehicles (EV), primarily adopted in used cars like taxi fleets. These vehicles won the acclaim of professional drivers as the most affordable and most convenient solution for mixed-cycle driving.

Central Europe (including Poland) and Eastern Europe (Belarus, Ukraine and Russia) import many secondhand cars from Western European countries. As Western Europe switches to EVs, we expect more internal combustion

vehicles to arrive in Poland that will be converted to autogas, and these vehicles will remain in service into the 2040s.

Also, we are exploring the possibility for the approval of autogas installations for agricultural tractors as diesel is becoming more expensive.

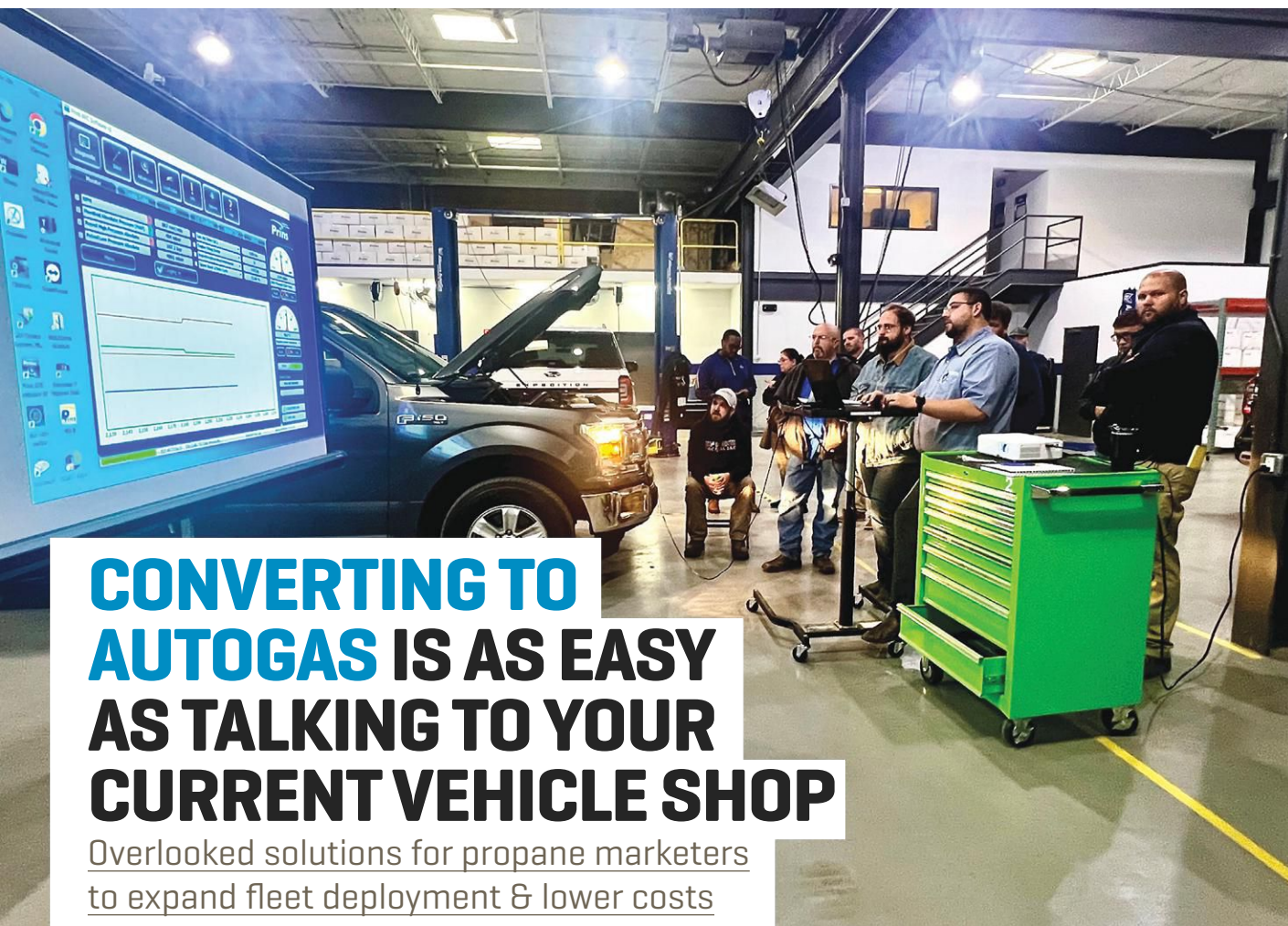
Berden: The autogas market in Western Europe is facing challenges. The EU and several individual countries have announced plans to ban internal combustion engines by 2035. It is critical that we continue to educate consumers, policymakers and regulators about the advantages of autogas in the face of growing concerns about the electrical infrastructure, safety, affordability and life cycle emissions of EVs.

On a global scale, there are growing opportunities in new markets like South America, Asia and Africa. And globally there are opportunities with hard-to-electrify fleets, such as medium-duty trucks. In many markets, there is inadequate infrastructure for EV charging and the total costs for EV adoption are far too high. Autogas is the solution, as it is a clean alternative fuel and the infrastructure is affordable.

A key for the autogas market is that more renewables come online to meet regulatory standards. This will require a coordinated effort within the industry to get the right regulations and policies in place while the market develops the projects to reach necessary volumes. 📌

Cinch Munson is the business development director at the World Liquid Gas Association, where his responsibilities include industry outreach and advocacy, standards and regulations, developing renewable liquid gas markets, improving efficiencies through technologies, and innovating applications. Prior to joining WLGA, he worked with Oberon Fuels, a renewable fuels producer, the Propane Education & Research Council, and other business development roles in energy and agriculture. Learn more about WLGA at www.worldliquidgas.com





CONVERTING TO AUTOGAS IS AS EASY AS TALKING TO YOUR CURRENT VEHICLE SHOP

Overlooked solutions for propane marketers
to expand fleet deployment & lower costs

BY STUART WEIDIE

Propane marketers around the country often cite the lack of an autogas service network as a reason to not deploy our energy source in their own fleets. At first glance, this is understandable. However, they are missing out on the numerous benefits of using autogas, including reduced maintenance costs (especially versus diesel) and a large reduction in fuel costs.

For new purchases, there is a swiftly growing network of propane vehicle “upfitters” who are trained and qualified to install autogas systems. When the marketer receives the new vehicle, it is already running on propane. When a propane company wants to convert an existing gasoline engine to run on

autogas, these upfitters — along with more than 120 certified installers in the Alliance AutoGas network — are available to perform this task. ROUSH CleanTech also has a map of service and installation centers. But what about servicing the individual vehicle once it is deployed in the marketer’s fleet?

One of the most overlooked options is your existing local shop. The process starts with a simple question: “Where do I currently get my vehicles serviced and maintained?” Often, this is a viable solution. Have you ever talked to them about autogas? Not only is this a new revenue stream for your existing shop, but it is also an option to have autogas technicians in your area able to service

other vehicles in the community, giving you a head start in selling autogas to fleets in the area. The propane company becomes the “anchor” customer for the shop, giving them a new stream of customers through autogas fleets.

Companies such as Alliance AutoGas offer twice-monthly training to shops and vehicle technicians that are open to everyone. Vehicle uptime is critical to any fleet but especially to the propane marketer during the busy fall and winter months. The minimal annual maintenance requirements (filter changes, diagnostics and tank inspection) can all be performed locally and can be scheduled during periods of less demand.

Educating a local shop on autogas systems not only enhances the relationship between the propane marketer and the entity keeping their vehicle on the road, but it also increases the credibility of the shop by increasing its service offerings.

The Propane Education & Research Council (PERC) is also investing in the training of service technicians around the country. PERC is focused on working with local technical schools and community colleges to provide funds through their Propane Autogas Vehicle Inspection Grant Program.

Another issue propane marketers tend to cite with propane autogas is this: “My diesel vehicle has a much higher miles per gallon (MPG) performance than my gasoline or propane vehicle.” Cost per mile (CPM) is a more appropriate measurement of annual vehicle costs versus using MPG. When considering the cost of diesel maintenance — particularly any problems with the after-treatment

system, the fuel cost and the scheduled maintenance — there is no contest between the two. Actual data from propane marketers, such as Green’s Blue Flame Gas in Texas, has shown that the CPM to run a propane vehicle is 65 cents per mile on autogas versus \$1.01 for diesel when comparing a Ford F750 with a 3,100-gallon barrel to a diesel bobtail with the same size barrel.

The numbers are consistent with service vehicles ranging from an F250 to F650 when comparing CPM for autogas versus diesel service trucks. This results in an astounding 45% reduction in fuel costs, without including the excise fuel tax credit. When including that fuel tax credit into the analysis, the numbers improve dramatically.

In years past, many marketers have expressed doubt about the viability of the propane autogas market. Comments have focused on whether this will hurt the core residential business and other commercial or industrial applications

that our industry serves. The fact is, the United States is exporting over 25 billion gallons of propane annually, and the number is growing. There is an excess of propane that is available to use in our industry vehicles and commercial fleets here in the U.S., as opposed to being exported to other countries.

Together, we can grow the adoption of autogas in our propane industry fleets. Unlike 15 or 25 years ago, there are viable, quality technology options to operate a vehicle on autogas. If we start small and get our local shops involved, the opportunities are limitless. 🏠

Stuart Weidie is the president of Alliance AutoGas, the complete solution for converting fleets to propane autogas. He has also served as chairman of PERC and the National Propane Gas Association. He was inducted into the LP Gas Hall of Fame in 2018.



Two Years Later, We're Glad We Chose EDP.

“We liked EDP’s values and how the company was run. There are no new faces here. The same drivers are here, the same management is in place and the same people answer the phones. I would absolutely recommend EDP to another business owner who is considering a sale.”

**Former owners of Liberty Propane
and Meadows Petroleum
Matt McGuigan and Kevin Meadows**



EDP will value your company's legacy and take good care of your employees. See what other sellers have to say by visiting edplp.net/testimonials.



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

EDP
WWW.EDPLP.NET

UNVEILING AUTOGAS: THE SUPERIOR CHOICE FOR FLEET MANAGEMENT

Discover why autogas stands out as the prime alternative fuel for fleets — from growing infrastructure & cost-effectiveness to the ease of refueling

BY JESSICA GRAHAM PHILLIPS

Autogas is a growing sector of the propane industry — one that's important to stay informed about as the industry works harder and harder to get more fleets to implement the fuel. Ahead, Derek Rimko, vice president of operations for Superior Energy Systems, and Todd Mouw, executive vice president for ROUSH CleanTech, provide insights into refueling infrastructure, the best talking points in discussions with fleet management, and why this fuel stands out as the superior choice for propane marketers as well.

What makes autogas a superior alternative fuel choice for fleets?

Rimko: There are many benefits to autogas, but the most important one is that autogas has the lowest cost of ownership of any alternative fuel. You will meet fleets that

LIQUEFIED PETROLEUM

WARNING!
LIQUEFIED PETROLEUM GAS
IMPROPER USE OF THIS REFUELING EQUIPMENT
CAN RESULT IN PERSONAL INJURY AND/OR PROPERTY DAMAGE.
SEEK ASSISTANCE IF YOU ARE NOT FAMILIAR
WITH THE PROPER USE OF THIS EQUIPMENT.
CAUTION: DISCHARGE STATIC ELECTRICITY BY TOUCHING
METAL PRIOR TO INSERTING NOZZLE INTO VEHICLE RECEPTACLE.
IF NOZZLE IS NOT PROPERLY LOCKED, IT MAY FORCE OPEN DURING FUELING.
NOZZLE MAY DISCONNECT WITH GREAT FORCE DURING FUELING.



want to/have to lower their emissions, and you will meet fleets that want the “green” aspect alternative fuels provide for their company reputation — but you will never meet a fleet that will turn down saving money.

Mouw: Each alternative fuel has its pros and cons, but autogas checks many of the required boxes for fleet operators, especially for Class 4-7 vehicles where electric vehicles really are not commercially viable today. Autogas offers comparable range to diesel. It provides a significant cost reduction due to the differential in fuel prices. The industry has made significant inroads in growing the supply of renewable propane, which offers fleets a path to a near-zero solution without compromising range or available payload. Infrastructure is much simpler and lower cost than any alternative option as well. Propane also thrives in the winter months, providing heat much faster to the occupants of trucks and school buses without range sacrifices.

Can you give an overview on the state of autogas refueling station infrastructure?

Rimko: School buses are obviously a substantial user in the U.S., but we have

seen the market outside of school buses grow with larger fleets, like package delivery providers expanding their autogas fleets. Many of these fleets, including school buses, have tested other alternative fuel vehicles and come back to autogas thanks to its reliability, economic value, scalability and low emissions. The quality of both the vehicles and infrastructure play a large part in that, and fleets have also come to trust the equipment and manufacturers. We expect autogas to continue its upward trend thanks to these characteristics and to continue to compete against electric vehicles in the alternative energy space as fleets recognize what it takes to run those fleets versus autogas. Infrastructure still has room for growth in other fleet segments, such as transit. There is also a significant number of marketers who have not added autogas to their offerings, and there is plenty of room for growth amongst them as they approach new and existing fleets.

Mouw: The industry has made significant strides to make the user experience more user friendly when it comes to infrastructure. The implementation of the Euro/quick-connect filling nozzle has been a great change for the operators

and has further reduced fugitive emissions during the fill process. The standardization of equipment and specifications to ensure a truck and school bus get a comparable fill rate to diesel has been another gain. The emergence of renewable propane as a near-zero solution is a game changer — it’s a drop-in with no change to the infrastructure or vehicle technology. As an industry, I think we can always improve. How we communicate pricing to customers has to get more consistent. There should be an understanding of an autogas price and also the price for the traditional uses of propane. Listing available locations for fleets to fill, hours of operation, etc., on public-facing websites and apps needs to improve.

Does autogas provide a better return on investment for fleet management in terms of time spent refueling, how often trucks typically need to be refueled, etc.?

Rimko: It is not so much about time as it is whether the fleet even has the ability of enough downtime for time-consuming refuels or recharge. Take a transit fleet, for example: They tend to offer transport to their customers for a large portion of

the day, if not 24/7, which gives them little time to refuel. In this instance, autogas makes a lot of sense because refueling can take a couple of minutes as opposed to hours for charging electric vehicles. A typical fleet vehicle can refuel with a Superior Energy Systems' autogas dispenser in less than five minutes at approximately 10 gallons per minute. This refueling time is a similar, if not a better, amount of time than the gasoline and diesel refueling durations.

Mouw: This is a soft cost that we talk to our fleets about. In most cases our product provides similar range to their gas or diesel counterpart, so the labor costs spent fueling vehicles is comparable. The savings that should get discussed more are related to how long school districts idle diesel buses to get them to warm up in the morning compared to how quickly propane buses warm up. There are hard costs on the diesel side, such as additional fuel burn and labor arriving earlier to start the

'The [autogas] technology works. The savings are significant. It is easier to find technicians to work on spark-ignited engines than a diesel engine.'

buses — not to mention the additional emissions from diesel bus idling.

What are the best entry points for marketers to convince fleet management to switch to autogas?

Rimko: *Scalability* — Autogas refueling equipment can easily be expanded as the fleet's needs change.

Low-carbon emissions — Autogas vehicles cut significantly more nitrogen oxide and

greenhouse gas emissions compared with diesel and gasoline.

Economics — Historically, propane autogas is cheaper than gasoline or diesel and is more insulated from the price spikes of conventional fuels. There are also both federal and state tax benefits for fleets using autogas, and the cost of autogas infrastructure is significantly lower than other alternative fuels.

Ease of infrastructure — Autogas infrastructure options vary based on fleet size and most are simple to install in a minimal amount of time with a small footprint. In addition, refueling systems are easy to use and work similarly to conventional fuel refueling.

Fuel and equipment reliability — Autogas is plentiful in supply and available anywhere in the country. In addition, the equipment is technologically advanced, certified and reliable. The vehicles also do not require complex emission systems, which cause spikes in downtime for repairs, like some diesel vehicles.

Excelsior-Flo Regulators

HIGH PRESSURE / HIGH TEMPERATURE



- Adjustable high-pressure PSI to PSI regulator
- LPG, High-Temp LPG, and NH3 applications
- 1/2", 3/4" or 1" connection sizes
- 250 PSI maximum inlet pressure
- Available delivery pressure ranges from 3-125 PSI
- Flow capacities up to 14,000,000 BTU/hr LPG @ 30 PSI
- Convenient factory plugged 1/4" FNPT auxiliary port



VIEW
PRODUCT
BROCHURE



PLANT | TRUCK | RESIDENTIAL | INDUSTRIAL | RECREATIONAL

1506 George Brown Drive Marshall, MI 49068 | P 269.789.6700 | www.marshallexcelsior.com

Mouw: It starts with cost savings and getting to a business manager or chief financial officer. We are seeing a multitude of fleets save in excess of 34 cents per mile, so when you talk about a fleet with 10 to 20 or more assets in their fleet, they can do the math and understand the significant impact it can make on their organization. We also have to ensure we are talking about this change with all of the other influencers in the process — from drivers to technicians to first responders. There obviously is a huge push to reduce carbon footprint and harmful emissions, but if the financial picture does not box, it is tough to get a fleet to scale with a new technology.

Why should more marketers implement fleets that run on autogas? What steps can be taken to make this viable for marketers?

Rimko: In terms of marketers making the decision to sell autogas, let's provide a quick example of gallons used. Superior

Energy Systems recently installed a 30,000-gallon storage tank and four dispensers for a school district in Northwest Ohio. In the first two weeks following start up of that station, the district pumped over 10,000 gallons of autogas with minimal involvement from the marketer. The ROI is clear and there are hundreds of gallon-usage examples just like this across the country. In addition, most of these fleets are signing multiple-year contracts to lock in their supplier and price. To us, this makes a lot of sense. Marketers should start by talking to partners in autogas. The Propane Education & Research Council is an obvious choice for education and training, but we always encourage marketers to reach out to infrastructure and vehicle suppliers. The more information they have, the better equipped they are to approach fleets, and the majority of those manufacturers are going to be more than happy to help. We often come alongside a marketer as they

meet with a fleet to discuss what their needs are and as they begin some of the more technical aspects of permitting and engineering. Don't be afraid to reach out.

Mouw: Look at the financial impact on your organization. Think about saving 34 cents-plus per mile in your own fleet. Think about operating the fuel that you sell and promote in your community. Think about a school district you want to sell propane to asking you, "Why don't you run propane in your own fleet?" The technology works. The savings are significant. It is easier to find technicians to work on a spark-ignited engine than a diesel engine. It reduces harmful emissions in the communities that you work and live in. With diesel likely getting regulated out of the Class 4-7 segment, now is our time to take advantage of the opportunity. ▮

Jessica Graham Phillips is the editor of Butane-Propane News magazine.

Energy and Fleet Managers and Propane Marketers come to Westmor when they need to lower operating costs with increased delivery efficiencies, payload, safety, and driver satisfaction. Oftentimes they're looking to retain their drivers with a truck design that is ergonomic, safe, and easy for drivers to operate.



westmor-ind.com



DELIVER IT YOUR WAY

SCAN TO LEARN MORE



- » Match your truck and equipment to your operational needs
- » Select equipment to increase delivery efficiencies, payload and safety
- » Designed for driver comfort, ergonomics and simple operation
- » Diversify and meet your operation with customized features and options
- » Made in the USA



MAXIMIZING EFFICIENCY & PERFORMANCE: THE IMPORTANCE OF VENDOR INTEGRATION FOR PROPANE MARKETERS

Streamlining workflows & enhancing decision-making through data consolidation & software integration

BY KELLY ENGEL

In the dynamic landscape of propane delivery operations, efficiency is paramount. Propane marketers rely on a multitude of products and services to ensure smooth operations, from delivery bobtails to safety compliance tools. One often neglected aspect is the incorporation of data produced by these products and services into back-office software. In this article, we consider the importance of data consolidation and explore how data collected from products and services can be seamlessly integrated into a central hub — such as back-office software — allowing for optimizing efficiency and decision-making processes within propane delivery operations.

The key to harnessing the full potential of these products and services lies in data consolidation and seamless integration

with back-office software, providing marketers with a comprehensive view of their operations and helping facilitate informed decision-making. By integrating data reporting capabilities into back-office software, marketers can streamline operational workflows, improve resource allocation and enhance overall efficiency. Real-time dashboards provide stakeholders with actionable insights, enabling proactive decision-making and facilitating continuous improvement initiatives. Moreover, automated reporting reduces the burden on administrative staff, freeing up time and resources for strategic initiatives.

Let's explore some of the various products and services frequently used in propane delivery operations that generate data and examine how they

may be integrated into a back-office software system, streamlining workflows and enhancing decision-making.

DELIVERY BOBTAILS

Propane bobtails can be equipped with advanced telematics that track various metrics, such as fuel consumption, engine operations, route efficiency, maintenance schedules and gallons delivered. Integrating this data into back-office software enables marketers to monitor fleet performance in real time, optimize delivery routes and schedule maintenance proactively. Additionally, data on driver behavior and adherence to safety protocols can be captured and analyzed to enhance driver training programs and ensure compliance with industry regulations. Discuss with both the truck supplier and the back-office software provider to explore options for centralizing these data points into the back office.

TANK MONITORS

While the focus of tank monitors is to measure and report tank content, they may also send information, such as

the last date reading, communication signal strength and battery status. Integrating tank monitor data with back-office software enables marketers to remotely monitor multiple sites, receive automated alerts for critical events and optimize delivery schedules based on real-time inventory, all in conjunction with other back-office data. Historical tank monitor data can be used for trend analysis and forecasting.

TEST EQUIPMENT

Test equipment, such as pressure testers and leak detectors, are crucial in conducting routine inspections and compliance testing. Integrating their data into back-office systems streamlines reporting, automates regulatory compliance checks and maintains a comprehensive record of inspection results. Furthermore, centralized data management facilitates trend analysis and identifies areas for

process improvement, enhancing safety standards and customer satisfaction.

VIDEO CAMERAS

Video surveillance systems installed at propane storage facilities and on bobtails serve as essential security measures and monitor operational activities. Camera feeds can be integrated with back-office software, providing conveniently accessed, real-time visibility into facility and bobtail operations.

SAFETY COMPLIANCE

Safety compliance tools encompass a wide range of software solutions designed to streamline regulatory compliance, manage documentation and enhance customer communications. Integrating these tools with back-office systems enables marketers to automate compliance reporting, track regulatory changes and streamline communication with regulatory agencies. Furthermore,

centralized document management ensures that critical safety procedures and protocols are easily accessible to employees, reducing the risk of accidents and ensuring regulatory compliance.

ELECTRONIC PAYMENT PROCESSING

Integrating electronic payment processing with back-office software offers numerous benefits by streamlining operations, improving efficiency and providing customer convenience. While considering vendors for payment processing and back-office software, learn what choices are available for integrating electronic payments into the back-office software and payments made through a customer portal or a driver application.

WEATHER

Automating the integration of real-time and projected weather information into back-office software eliminates the

YOUR BOBTAIL SOLUTION

- ✔ Operate your fleet with the fuel you sell.
- ✔ Significantly reduce your fuel and maintenance costs with a propane-powered 33,000 GVWR bobtail.



ROUSH
CLEANTECH

ROUSHcleantech.com
800.59.ROUSH

“Our customers operate vehicles fueled by propane autogas. We want to walk the walk and show our customers that we believe in propane and its technology, too. Running our own vehicles on propane saves money and supports our goal to be good stewards for the environment.” — Monte McLeod, ThompsonGas

need for manual data entry. Moreover, it offers the adaptability to gather weather updates from diverse channels, thereby contributing to improved propane delivery predictions.

MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

When managing marketing campaigns, whether handled internally or through an external firm, the business can be inundated with a large amount of data. Lean on the back-office vendor to learn how they may offer solutions to integrate the data into a cohesive and actionable format. By leveraging their expertise and tools, you can streamline the process of collecting, organizing and analyzing data, allowing for more informed decision-making. Additionally, collaborating closely with the back-office vendor can facilitate the customization of reporting structures tailored to your specific needs and objectives. This partnership ensures that you not only

gather data efficiently but also extract meaningful insights that drive the success of your marketing initiatives.

Within the ever-evolving business of propane delivery services, the relentless pursuit of efficiency stands as a cornerstone of success. As explored in this article, the integration of data reporting capabilities into back-office software emerges as a pivotal strategy for propane marketers. Through the seamless consolidation of data from a multitude of sources — including delivery bobtails, tank monitors, test equipment, surveillance systems and more — marketers can unlock a comprehensive view of their operations.

This integration not only facilitates real-time monitoring and informed decision-making but also streamlines workflows, optimizes resource allocation and assists in adherence to regulatory standards. As we navigate the intricate

landscape of propane delivery, it becomes increasingly evident that the synergy between data consolidation and back-office software integration is indispensable, paving the way for enhanced efficiency and sustained success. Looking ahead, the convergence of data integration with artificial intelligence holds immense promise for further optimizing efficiency and refining decision-making processes within propane delivery operations. 📌

Kelly Engel became familiar with the software challenges propane marketers face during his 20 years as an IT consultant and software developer. In 2017, Engel co-founded FuelMor Propane Software, bringing software as a service to the industry. Engel can be reached at 530-290-1145 or kelly@fuelmor.com.



H&HTM SALES COMPANY, INC.

CUSTOM TRUCK BODIES AND MANUFACTURING

1951-2024 • 73 years strong

WHY RISK YOUR FIRST-CLASS IMAGE WITH SECOND-RATE EQUIPMENT?



You've worked too hard earning your customers' trust to have unpredictable equipment performance trip you up. Nobody understands that like H&H. Our custom truck bodies and cylinder delivery trucks are designed with field work in mind. We build them one at a time from the most rugged, high quality materials and components available. No corners cut, no details overlooked. As a result, an H&H truck body won't let you down on the job. You get efficient, affordable, dependable performance, year after year, so your customers get the prompt, effective service they expect — every time.



800.551.9341 info@hhsalescompany.com

YOU ASKED WE LISTENED

NEW TRIARC TANK UNDERGROUND LID

FOAM FILLED & INJECTION MOLDED

45% IMPROVEMENT IN CANTILEVER LOADING

AVAILABLE: APRIL 2024

WWW.TRIARCTANK.COM



TANK MONITORING & IMPLEMENTATION

THE PROPANE LEVAC WAY

The ins & outs of one Canadian retailer's monitoring strategy

BY ELIZABETH MANNING



The adage “slow and steady wins the race” most assuredly applies to the team at Propane Levac when it comes to its approach to implementing a tank monitoring program across its company. The team has been intentional and strategic about adding the technology in each of its customer segments since the very beginning, and Christian Levac, president of Propane Levac, credits a long-term partnership with tech providers like Otodata, as well as comprehensive training, to their success in the endeavor.

Headquartered in eastern Ontario, Canada, the liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) retailer was started in 1993 by Jean-Marc Levac, who owned a small agricultural business and sought to expand his range of services by selling propane to customers in the area. Propane Levac currently serves more than 37,000 customers in the Ontario and Quebec provinces and employs more than 120 employees. Christian and his brother Étienne have joined their father on the leadership team and are focused on future growth for the company, including through the implementation of new tech to improve longstanding business challenges.

The retailer is currently monitoring approximately 10,000 installations, from large commercial outfits to small residential customers. Learn more about Propane Levac and its journey with tank monitoring ahead.

How many of the accounts in your customer base use tank monitors? Are there any specific segments where tank monitors play a more prevalent role?

It's a mix of segments between residential and commercial customers. Approximately 30% of our accounts are monitored. Almost all of the corn dryers — agricultural customers — are equipped with monitors, as well as all of our bulk facilities.

All of our bulk facilities, including our two rails terminal, are monitored by tank monitors. Then we encourage monitoring in a commercial application when needed and in residential applications as well.

With our accounts that have a secondary source of heat — such as fireplaces, a heat pump, etc. — we cannot accurately gauge a precise K-factor (or degree days). On these accounts we prefer to use a monitor to help track usage.

Another example is with low-volume customers where we have little to no predictability for the frequency of delivery needed.

With all the storms and severe weather we've been having in recent months — and resulting power failures — a lot of our customers now have generators, and with this use case, it's nearly impossible for us to predict their delivery frequency. Here again is a perfect use case for a tank monitor.

What was your original strategy for implementation? Has it changed?

We started pretty much from day one with monitors. We were using another supplier before Otodata, but obviously the cost of tank monitoring back then was extravagant. You would really need to think and consider the return on investment [ROI] with any tank monitoring solution you purchased.

Otodata offered a low-frequency, lower-cost alternative, which made a lot of sense for our company. It's been around 10 years since we made that move, and in that time, we've honed our strategy to one that is precise and intentional about the customers we need to monitor. In the beginning with implementing tank monitoring, I was worried about some of the materials used for monitor housing and wiring, and about the battery life of the monitors.

The technology and the materials used for these monitors has continued to improve over the years, though. And with our costs of delivery and operation increasing consistently, it has become imperative for us to try to lower those expenses, including the cost of delivery per stop. Over the last few years, we've been installing anywhere between 1,500 to 2,000 monitors per year, and we plan to maintain that growth this year.

We're currently running a program with Otodata to analyze our customer usage and evaluate the return on

investment for the tank monitors we are implementing. If we could get to 100% of customers monitored and it would make financial sense, we would do it — but it's not an easy task to navigate the installation of 3,000, 4,000 or 5,000 monitors a year. There's both the physical installation and that time to keep in mind, in addition to linking everything and setup back in the office.

What are the biggest benefits with tank monitoring for customers and drivers?

On the customer side, one of the biggest pain points in the business is run outs. And for us, how do we prevent those run outs? The tank monitors have helped a lot with mitigating customer run outs — as much as we can do to increase predictability in our business is good.

For our drivers, the monitors help to find the balance in delivery scheduling — lowering risk, increasing efficiency and ensuring they are right where they need to be, not where they think they need to be. The app [launched by Otodata about five years ago] has also been a huge benefit to both our customers and our drivers and dispatch. Among other features, customers can quickly and accurately monitor their levels in the app.

We've also launched our own portal for Propane Levac. In the portal, customers can request a delivery monitor, order gas, view usage history, and see price fluctuations and the percentage fill in their tank at any given time. With the portal and our enterprise resource planning system linked, our operations have become so much more seamless.

How did you train your service technicians for tank monitor installation and operation?

When we implemented the monitors, Otodata provided us with installation guides, which we give to our install crew. It's a regular part of our training now — we hire a new driver or technician and then teach them how to understand the difference between different monitors and their applications.

Otodata also sends regular guides and notifications about key updates to the monitors and their operating systems, which are helpful for keeping our technicians up to date with the technology. Once the technician is trained, installing a new monitor or replacing an old one is basically plug-and-play, and everything else is done on the back end.

What are the biggest pain points in tank monitoring currently?

Cost, hah! The lower the cost, the easier it is for us to install in different applications. It's important that as the cost of the technology decreases, the quality of the hardware does not do so as well. Additionally with cost, you have to factor in the ROI on each and every monitor. Is there an advantage to monitoring this particular customer or another? And if not, we change our strategy accordingly.

Another huge pain point is battery life of the monitors — and not only battery life, but also the reliability of the appliance. We don't want to have to swap a thousand of them a year. It's not like you're fixing a portal — you're fixing something you must send a technician out for a service call to repair. They need to be reliable when they are deployed and for a long while after.

How do you plan for repairs and service with your drivers?

We try not to mix deliveries and monitor service. Our bobtail drivers stay busy with delivery, and especially in the busy season, we need every driver out delivering fuel. This is particularly true on the bulk delivery side. Most of our drivers are trained and know how to swap out a monitor, but there's just better use of a bulk truck than swapping out tank monitors left and right.

How does weather play into your monitoring service & implementation strategy?

We've talked about the overall costs of operation going up for propane

marketers — and this applies to everything from fuel and equipment to labor and technology. Being able to efficiently deploy drivers and service techs where they are needed most, especially during severe weather events and colder weather, is paramount.

As much as I want to track usage on a K-factor or days interval, I'm never as efficient using this method as if I have monitors tracking that information for us on the harder-to-reach customers. In the summers, a lot of residential customers in Canada heat their pools, and in the winters, a fireplace or generator may be the inconsistent use case. Monitoring helps the customer and us in all these diverse situations.

What advice do you have for the marketer on the front end of implementing tank monitors?

Depending on the size of the operation, there will be logistics issues. If you're a smaller retailer and you're trying to go from zero monitors to 3,000 tomorrow, it may seem easy on paper but it's going to be a wholly different challenge out in the field.

Additionally, when we started, we had a lot of monitors installed, but our web portal and our [enterprise resource planning] platform were not connected. That was a huge challenge. We were creating tickets manually and then entering data into the platform.

All that to say, being intentional about your approach from the start is important and will save you from headaches down the road. You have to train yourself in addition to your customers and your employees on both the technology and the back-office platform.

Don't underestimate the time it will take to do all the above. It's worth every penny to spend the necessary time on it, too. 📌

Elizabeth Manning is the director of content at Cahaba Media Group, parent company of Butane-Propane News (BPN). She previously served as editor of BPN.



STOCKPHOTO/DIRECTORS/ADOBESTOCK

THE LIFE-CHANGING MAGIC OF TIDYING UP YOUR SHOWROOM

Why maintaining a clean, neat store is essential to keeping customers shopping

BY LINDA CAHAN

As spring nears, it's time for a fresh, new feeling in your showroom. Spring cleaning isn't just for your home, after all.

The entire energy of your showroom changes when you move things around and clean at the same time. Customers are unconsciously aware of energy shifts and are more attracted to merchandise that has been moved to a new spot.

Years ago, I spoke at the Atlanta Gift Show on visual merchandising and mentioned how moving product creates sales. A woman in the audience raised her hand and said, "Every morning I walk into my store and move one thing, and every day that one thing sells!" I joked that the next day everyone would be walking into their stores and moving 15

things to see if it worked. It got a laugh, but I'll always wonder if people tried it. I know I would!

I worked for a boutique several years ago, and when we put merchandise on a rolling rack to move to another location, that was the first thing customers would be drawn to. It became a joke — if something isn't selling, move it and it'll sell immediately.

MOTIVATING SALES STAFF

Does your sales staff proactively move and clean shelved products when they're not with a customer? Or are they staring intently at their phones solving the world's problems or checking out the latest cat videos?

Rarely will a salesperson volunteer to clean, straighten and reset merchandise unless asked to, unless you have an amazingly motivated person working for you. If so, congratulations! If not, early

in the year is a great time to initiate new programs.

Consider holding a staff meeting to introduce the program. Each person who works on the selling floor (and perhaps those who work behind the scenes, if they are not constantly busy) gets an area of the selling floor they are responsible for. Ideally, these areas are as equal as possible when it comes to the quantity of products. Their job is to make sure their area is clean and well-stocked, with all labels facing forward and items pulled to the front of shelves. Merchandise equipment on the selling room floor is kept tidy and buffed clean. If this is done between customers, it really doesn't take that long.

If an office area is visible, have one person be responsible for that. Remove all shipping and/or empty boxes, make sure desks are neat (this is not going to be a popular part of the program), align brochures and straighten up anything

that looks messy. If tables and chairs are misaligned, move them back into place. This maintenance should not take long, and little changes can make a huge difference in customers' eyes.

Introducing this innovative maintenance program could be challenging, and I'm being polite with my language. When introducing it, ask employees to vote on whether they get one area that is "theirs" to maintain for as long as they are working or if they'd prefer to get a new area every two weeks, every month or every other month. When given a choice, even for something they have no desire to do, the act of choosing helps people feel like they have some say in a new directive.

If you have never asked your staff to help with merchandise maintenance, this new initiative could annoy them. But you have to start sometime, and keeping your showroom looking neat, clean and fresh will make your customers feel more

comfortable in their experience with you. The more they shop, the more people keep their jobs.

If you already have a person hired to take care of this daily, you're all set. If not, chances are good that your store isn't looking as fresh as it should. If you are sure that your staff will rebel at the idea of cleaning and straightening up the merchandise, you may consider a part-time merchandiser who takes care of different parts of the selling area on a rotating basis. This person should come in at least three times a week.

CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CROSS-MERCHANDISING

Cross-merchandising is an excellent way to introduce new products to your customers. Once again, at a staff meeting, ask your salespeople how they create multiple sales. What products do they recommend their customers purchase together? If you have space in your



**THE PROVEN
AUTOGAS SOLUTION
FOR THE PROPANE
INDUSTRY**

**1-800-40-AUTOGAS
ALLIANCEAUTOGAS.COM**

showroom, have each person who has offered a good suggestion create a cross-merchandising display. This could be mixing a group of products together that solve a specific issue. Develop a bundle of problem-solving products and consider offering them at a slightly discounted price when bought together.

To make this extra work more palatable to your staff, consider making it a competition. Track the sales of each cross-merchandised display and award a prize to the top seller after a month. Prizes of value include time off, a better parking spot, money or something that is specific to that person.

A huge drugstore/gift shop in Sisters, Oregon, had this program in place. Each sales associate had their own area to maintain. The sales from each of their areas were tallied daily, and a winner was declared at the end of each month. The competition was friendly and fierce, and the entire store looked great as a result.

Over the years, I have written visual standards guides for huge corporations as well as individually owned stores and small chains. From American Express Travel Related Services, United Rentals, the Bowling Proprietors' Association of America (BPAA), Singer, Saks Fifth Avenue and many other corporations, to Alamar Uniforms with three stores, these guides have allowed management to train their staff to keep their standards high.

Maintenance is always covered first. It involves everything you see as you walk up to, into and through a store. While your staff probably isn't going to replace the lightbulbs on your outdoor sign, mop the floors, or clean the facade and windows, they will notice if management doesn't take care of those things. If you fail to hire specific people to take care of major items, you are exhibiting to your employees your lack of care for your facility. If you don't care about your responsibility, why should they?

Maintenance starts at the top and influences everyone who works there. If you are proud of your showroom, you encourage others to feel that way as well. This "pride of place" influences your customers. Your products are headed to your customers' homes. Your store should be as neat and clean as they are — or perhaps more so. The word "aspirational" comes to mind. When people shop in an environment they respect, that creates equal respect for the products and expertise of the people working there. 🍷

Linda Cahan is the president of Portland, Oregon-based Cahan & Co., a consulting firm that works with retailers of all sizes and categories to improve their bottom line through affordable and appropriate visual merchandising, store design and renovations. For more information, visit lindacahan.com.



Selling your propane business is a big decision.

Deciding to sell to Star Group ensures that your company's legacy, identity and reputation will be preserved in the community.

As one of the fastest-growing propane providers in the country, Star Group is actively searching for full-service propane companies to add to our family.



To arrange a confidential consultation, call 833.506.1805 or scan the code.





Are You Talking To The Right People?

THE LAW OF 'WHO'S THE BOSS?'

Connecting with the party authorizing the buying process improves your chances of making the sale

BY JIM MATHIS

The law of "Who's the Boss?": When the "real leader" connects, people buy. The real leader is the top influencer who gives permission to close the deal. When the buyer must get permission to write the check, it indicates you need to connect with that person. Find the permission-giver. Connect with them to add value and make the sale. Go to the top to get to the bottom line.

THE 'LUNCH GUY'

A friend told me his story about assisting a sales representative with a difficult client. The sales rep had been calling on this guy for several months with no success. They would talk and often go out for lunch, but no decision was ever reached about closing the sale. My friend went with this rep on his next visit to the guy's office. After a few minutes,

my friend cut to the chase and asked if he could buy. The man laughed and said, "That's not my job. I just chat with sales reps and take them to lunch. My boss down the hall makes all the buying decisions, but no one ever asks to speak with him."

So, my friend said, "May we speak with him ... all three of us?"

"Sure," the guy replied.

Down the hall they went, and guess what? His boss bought right away! The question wasn't "Will you buy?" but "Who will buy?" You may have heard of the old commercial that says, "When E.F. Hutton talks, people listen." Who is the "E.F. Hutton" that everyone listens to in the company? Who is the permission-giver in the company? That person will be your best bet to connect with, rather than a middle man.

If you are taking people out to lunch and not making sales, you are eating with the wrong people.

NETWORKING WITH PURPOSE

I used to attend local community networking breakfasts and after-hours receptions. Then, one day gazing around, I realized that almost all the people there were low on the corporate totem pole and in no position to buy my services. They were busy selling individual insurance policies, real estate services, party setups and even a chimney sweeper!

I stopped going to those meetings and found groups where the CEOs with the money and influencers were in attendance. I began connecting with them and adding value to their lives and businesses, spending my time and money on the people who could decide to buy. Now, I always make it a point to connect with the person everyone else must go to in order to get permission.

Make a commitment to meet the people who are the real leaders or can introduce you to the influencers.

Find out at the next event you attend who the person you are speaking with answers to regularly. Get them to talk about themselves. What is their greatest complaint? What problem is their company experiencing? Do due diligence on them and show interest in adding value and solving those problems. Call on them within a day or two and offer to come by to meet with their superiors who expressed the need. Get the person you met to introduce you as a reliable resource. It'll be your best introduction! Why? Because they want credit for finding you.

Are you attending meetings just to socialize or turning every event into a selling situation in your favor?

My first big training account started when I met a man at an after-hours networking event. He told me about his problems and found out I helped people

The person you must 'sell' is sometimes hard to find. ... They hire other people to keep them hidden. But your search will bear fruit.

just like him solve those problems. We met several days later, and he was so convinced that I wanted to make his job better by helping him that he introduced me to his human resources manager. She was the person in charge of corporate training services. So, together, we made an appointment with her.

She asked me to monitor their customer service lines for an hour. I

found out what she wanted and what pressure she was under from her superiors to remedy their problems. I crafted what I said based on what she told me. We connected on her problems, and I offered to customize what I did for them. After a meeting where I asked questions based on what she said, she asked me, "How do you want the check cut?"

That's the person I want to speak with all the time — either the permission-giver or the check-cutter. The two most important people are the check-cutter and the one who orders the check cut.

The person you must "sell" to can be hard to find. They may let their spouse do the talking. They might hide behind company receptionists. They cover themselves with voicemail. They hire other people to keep them hidden. But, your search will bear fruit. If you connect with the people between you and are able to make a bond, they will generally give you signals on who to approach.



ICOM

Alternative Fuel Systems

ICOM'S PATENTED BLUE 3.0 PROPANE LIQUID INJECTION SYSTEMS ARE AVAILABLE FOR MANY LIGHT AND MEDIUM DUTY FORD AND GM FLEET VEHICLES. ICOM'S ADVANTAGES INCLUDE:

- **REDUCE FUEL COST DRAMATICALLY, UTILIZING YOUR OWN DOMESTIC FUEL SUPPLY, REDUCE EMISSIONS FOR COMPANY SUSTAINABILITY**
- **EQUALS GASOLINE OEM TORQUE, HORSEPOWER AND PERFORMANCE**
- **INCLUDES ICOMS PATENTED EXTERNAL FUEL PUMP, FOR EASE AND SAFTY OF SERVICE AND REPLACEMENT**




- **DEALER / SERVICE NETWORK ACROSS NORTH AMERICA**
- **ON-SITE INSTALLATION BY ICOM FACTORY TECHNICIANS IS AVAILABLE FOR MANY LOCATIONS**
- **TECHNICAL AND PARTS SUPPORT HOTLINE**

WE STOCK PARTS AND REPLACEMENT TANKS FOR MANY DIFFERENT LIQUID INJECTION AUTOGAS SYSTEMS

248-573-4934

info@icomnorthamerica.com

www.icomnorthamerica.com

FOR THE LOVE OF CHERRY COKE

When you meet the top influencer of the company, spend time finding out what makes them tick (and what ticks them off). Find their “sweet spot.”

I love this story by John Maxwell of a young lady interviewing a wealthy gentleman for an article. He rarely met with any interviewers, and when he did, it lasted for no more than 30 minutes. She wanted more time with him, so she invested time researching him in advance and found out he loved Cherry Coke.

When she was granted the interview, she sat down and took out a cold Cherry Coke and handed it to him. His stern face fell, and he smiled. “How did you know I love Cherry Coke?” he asked. She told him that she wanted to spend quality time on the interview, so she had done her research.

He smiled and said, “Young lady, you may have as long as you want.” They

spoke for over two enjoyable hours. Are you willing to put in the time and effort to find out what motivates the true leader in your sales research? Have you found ways to add value to them to get noticed?

WHEN THE REAL LEADER CONNECTS, PEOPLE BUY

Next time you are making a sales call, ask who will cut the check or who authorizes payments. That is who you want to get in front of for successful sales.

I’m old school. When I was dating, if the parents wanted to meet me before I picked up their daughter, I spent time getting to know them. I answered questions more than I spoke. I wanted to put their minds at ease that I was responsible, raised right and their daughter was in good care for the evening. The same is true in sales.

If you must get permission from the “mom” or “dad” to make the sale, resolve the issue or cut the check, then connect

with “mom” or “dad.” Ask questions more than talk. Study their office, their posture and their interests. Take interest in them. Be an encourager and value-adder to them. Add value to their businesses and their lives. Go to the top if you expect to get to the bottom line. Can it be any simpler than that? ■

Jim Mathis, IPCS, CSP, CSML, is an International Platform Certified Speaker, Certified Speaking Professional, Certified Speaker & Trainer with the International John Maxwell Leadership Team and bestselling author of “Reinvention Made Easy: Change Your Strategy, Change Your Results.” For more information on how Mathis can benefit your organization or group, call 404-922-8199 or email jim@jimmathis.com.



**The Brands You
Know and Trust from
a Supplier You Can
Rely On**

REGO

Blackmer
A DOWNEY COMPANY



QUALITY STEEL

CORKEN

X-RISER

Algas SDI

**LPG & NH₃
Supply, Inc.**

Serving The Propane Industry Since 1976

**Call Us Today to See Why
Companies Are Switching!**



Equipment • Construction • Fabrication
1-800-328-0314 • www.lpgandnh3.com



BUILDING RESILIENCY IN YOUR PROPANE COMPANY

Strategies to accommodate your marketing & software operations for shifts in cybersecurity, customer demographics & more

BY MARTY KIRSHNER

From navigating the complexities of changing energy regulations to adapting to shifting consumer demographics, propane businesses must constantly adapt and innovate to remain competitive and resilient. Additionally, the ever-present threat of cyberattacks poses a significant risk to operations, requiring businesses to adopt robust cybersecurity measures to protect sensitive data and critical infrastructure. The key to survival is building resiliency into the business, enabling it to thrive amidst change and upheaval.

ADAPTING TO NEW DYNAMICS IN THE ENERGY INDUSTRY

The energy industry is undergoing a period of rapid transformation, driven by factors such as technological advancements, environmental concerns and evolving consumer preferences. Propane businesses must be prepared to adapt to these changes to maintain their market share and profitability.

Key Strategies

1. Embrace technology: Propane companies can leverage technology

to improve operational efficiency, customer service and overall business performance. This includes adopting cloud-based systems for managing customer data, inventory and deliveries, as well as implementing mobile applications for real-time tracking of delivery routes and technician schedules.

- 2. Monitor regulatory changes:** Stay informed about changes in energy regulations and proactively adapt business practices to comply with new and evolving requirements. This may involve investing in new equipment or training employees on new procedures.
- 3. Explore alternative energy sources:** Consider expanding product offerings to include alternative energy sources, such as renewable propane or solar, to meet the evolving needs of customers and diversify revenue streams.

To successfully implement these strategies, management should clearly communicate the reasons for change, engage employees in the planning process and provide comprehensive training. Setting measurable goals and recognizing achievements can also help build buy-in and maintain momentum.

SHIFTING DEMOGRAPHICS

The demographics of propane customers are changing, with a growing number of older adults and fewer millennials becoming homeowners. These shifts in demographics necessitate a tailored approach to marketing, sales and customer service.

Key Strategies

1. Understand customer needs:

Conduct market research to understand the specific needs and preferences of different customer segments, such as older adults

and millennials. This can be as sophisticated as a formal market study, or as simple as a survey of existing customers. Tailor marketing messages and sales strategies to resonate with each segment.

2. Embrace digital marketing: Use digital marketing channels, such as social media, pay-per-click ads and email campaigns to reach a wider audience and engage with potential customers. This will be particularly effective with younger homeowners.

3. Offer personalized customer service: Provide exceptional customer service tailored to the specific needs of each customer segment by offering online bill pay options, providing propane equipment maintenance and educating customers about energy efficiency measures. Use your customer database software to identify services and/or products that you can sell to individual customers.

To effectively market to and serve different customer segments, management should involve employees from various departments in strategy development. Customer-facing staff can provide invaluable insights, while marketing and IT teams can collaborate on tailored digital campaigns and innovative service offerings.

MITIGATING CYBER THREATS

Cyberattacks pose a significant threat to all businesses both large and small, and propane companies are no exception. A recent report on cybersecurity predicted that the cost of cybercrime would reach a massive \$9.5 trillion in 2024 and would be in excess of \$10.5 trillion in 2025. A cyber intrusion can disrupt operations, compromise sensitive data and damage a company's reputation. Businesses must implement robust cybersecurity measures to protect their systems and valuable assets.

Subscribe Today to Our Newsletters & Magazine

All the butane and
propane knowledge
you need — *and it's FREE!*

NEWSLETTERS

BPN Highlights — Our semiweekly rundown of the news and business content you need to succeed in the propane industry.

BPN Propane Products

— A monthly update of products and technology from propane manufacturers and solutions providers.



bpnews.com/subscribe

BUTANE-PROPANE NEWS

BPN

Key Strategies

1. Conduct cybersecurity risk assessments:

Regularly assess cybersecurity risks to identify potential vulnerabilities and implement the necessary and appropriate mitigation measures.

2. Implement employee cybersecurity training:

Educate all employees extensively about cybersecurity threats and best practices to protect company data and systems. This is not a “one-time” process but must be repeated regularly as the techniques used by cybercriminals evolve. This training should include simulated “phishing” to teach all employees to be alert for and recognize potential attempts to obtain access to your system through subterfuge.

3. Secure critical infrastructure:

Protect critical infrastructure, such as propane storage tanks and delivery vehicles, from cyberattacks by

implementing access controls and physical security measures.

Fostering a culture of cybersecurity awareness is crucial. Management should lead by example, adhering to best practices and encouraging open communication about potential threats. Regular training, clear policies and performance incentives can reinforce desired behaviors.

MAKE RESILIENCY A PRIORITY FROM TOP TO BOTTOM

By proactively addressing the challenges of changing dynamics, shifting demographics and cyber threats, propane companies can build resiliency and thrive in the face of adversity. This requires embracing change and adapting business strategies to stay ahead of industry trends and customer preferences. But it requires a “buy in” at all levels of an organization, from the

owner’s office, to the management team, to the customer service staff, and delivery and service personnel.

Open communication, clear expectations and acknowledgement of positive actions are essential parts of the process. Management should involve employees in strategic planning, provide ample training and resources, and celebrate successes along the way. Building resilience is an ongoing journey that requires dedication, agility and a commitment to continuous improvement from everyone in the organization. ■

Marty Kirshner is a partner and leads the Energy Practice Group at Gray, Gray & Gray LLP, a business consulting and accounting firm that serves the propane industry. He can be reached at 781-407-0300 or mkirshner@ggglp.com.



FIND OUT WHAT MAKES
OUR AUTOGAS DISPENSERS

SUPERIOR



Superior Energy Systems

440.236.6009 | superiornrg.com

**Protect Your Business!
Enforce Your Contracts!
Lock America's
Fill Valve & POlock**



**Your Own
Unique
Key Code!**

LOCK AMERICA
The Definitive Word in Locks

800-422-2866

www.laigroup.com

sales@laigroup.com



FIX IT BEFORE IT'S BROKEN

Leveraging a forward-resolve approach for better propane customer service

BY KATE ZABRISKIE

While a fix-it-the-first-time approach may be the gold standard of customer service, addressing potential issues before they materialize is the true mark of an exemplary user experience.

Consider the pace of our modern world: Propane customers today want increasingly instant solutions, and any hurdle might be a reason for them to jump ship to competitors. By ensuring their path is clear from potential obstructions before your customers encounter them, you can retain customers and create advocates for your brand.

Let's look at a few examples of forward-resolving in action.

Scenario: A customer signs up for a new broadband connection.

Forward-resolving: The service provider sends an email with tips for optimal modem placement, a list of helpline numbers and information on how to upgrade or modify the plan in the future.

Scenario: A customer books several rooms for a group event at a hotel.

Forward-resolving: The reservation agent proactively reaches out to the customer, offering services tailored for groups, such as distributing welcome gift bags, arranging group transportation, setting up a special check-in desk or organizing group tours.

Scenario: A user signs up for a new software application or a technical platform.

Forward-resolving: The company sends tutorial videos and starter guides to ensure users can efficiently use and navigate the software from the start.

As those examples illustrate, strong forward-resolving skills differentiate great from good providers. Organizations that get this right realize the following multiple benefits:

A better user experience — Whether it's high-functioning internet, a great event or software with a condensed learning curve, organizations that forward-resolve

deliver a better experience than those that don't.

Enhanced customer trust —

Organizations that deliver smooth experiences build trust with those who use their services.

Positive reputation — People who experience great service tell others. Over time, those experiences form a reputation.

Operational efficiency — When problems or challenges don't have a chance to materialize, call volumes decrease, freeing customer service providers to focus on other tasks.

ADOPTING A FORWARD-RESOLVING APPROACH

How does an organization move toward this way of operating? To forward-resolve, companies must know their business and think critically about what comes next for the customer. The following 10 ideas suggest actions for

getting started and the impact those activities can have.

1. Encourage Curiosity

Action: Cultivate a culture where team members constantly ask questions about processes, products, customer interactions, etc.

Impact: A questioning mind is more likely to spot potential challenges or areas of improvement.

2. Develop Empathy

Action: Encourage team members to regularly place themselves in their customers' shoes.

Impact: An empathetic approach allows one to predict customer pain points and address them preemptively.

3. Start Scenario Planning

Action: Conduct regular brainstorming sessions where teams discuss potential "what if" scenarios.

Impact: Imagining possible future situations helps teams prepare for them, fostering an anticipatory approach.

4. Empower Employees

Action: Give team members the autonomy to make decisions, take initiative and offer solutions.

Impact: Empowered employees feel a stronger sense of ownership, pushing them to think ahead and act proactively.

5. Invest in Training

Action: Regularly conduct training for your team on the latest products, services and customer feedback.

Impact: A well-informed team can better anticipate potential questions or customer issues.

6. Use Data Analytics

Action: Leverage data analytics to study customer behavior, feedback and purchasing patterns.

PROPANE TANK INSTALLATION EQUIPMENT



Install and remove full residential storage tanks with one operator, and the RTC420 line of tank dollies.

Motorized or manual versions available, each designed to safely transport a single 420 LB (100-Gallon) D.O.T. cylinder.

**Tank installations
that hit the Spot,
every time!
800-431-5564**



Renaldo Sales & Service, Inc.
1770 Milestrip Rd. • North Collins, NY 14111
info@renaldo.org • www.renaldo.org



Made In The USA



**The Leading Manufacturer of
Swivels for Liquefied Gas Transfer
For Over Three Decades**



fullcircleswivels.com

UL Listed, EU/UK Compliant, ISO 9001 QMS certified

UNRIVALED. DEPENDABLE. SEAMLESS

Impact: Recognizing patterns can help anticipate recurrent issues or predict future customer needs.

7. Feedback Loops

Action: Create mechanisms where team members can share their insights and observations from customer interactions.

Impact: Collective knowledge makes teams more alert to potential problems or needs.

8. Stay Updated With Industry Trends

Action: Encourage teams to keep abreast of industry news, emerging technologies and competitor offerings.

Impact: Understanding the broader market helps fend off obsolescence.

9. Celebrate Proactive Behavior

Action: Recognize and reward team members who showcase an anticipatory mindset by spotting potential challenges or suggesting proactive solutions.

Impact: Positive reinforcement encourages more forward-thinking behavior among the team.

10. Iterate & Learn

Action: After implementing a proactive solution, review its impact. Understand what worked and what didn't.

Impact: Continuous learning refines the anticipatory mindset, making it more accurate over time.

Forward-resolving is not a static process. It requires constant innovation. The methods and strategies used today might become obsolete tomorrow. Organizations should integrate it into every department, not just customer service, to cultivate a forward-resolving culture. Whether product development, marketing or sales, every team should have an anticipatory mindset. When the entire organization operates with this proactive approach, it becomes

a seamless, efficient machine geared toward optimal customer satisfaction.

Forward-resolving is not just a strategy; it's a philosophy for a company to carry out in all of its operations. It's a commitment to ensuring a customer's smooth, enjoyable and hassle-free journey. In the long run, propane businesses that adopt and perfect this approach are the ones that stand out, thrive and lead in the industry. ■

Kate Zabriskie is the president of Business Training Works Inc., a Maryland-based talent development firm. She and her team provide on-site, virtual and online soft-skills training courses and workshops to clients in the United States and internationally. For more information, visit businesstrainingworks.com.



THE POWER TO MAKE EVERY GALLON COUNT.

Gray, Gray & Gray's Power of More® delivers more for your energy business.

More ideas. More opportunities. More solutions. More of the focused accounting, tax, business advisory and financial management services you need to thrive, including our industry-leading FuelExchange™ M&A service.

Contact Marty or Carl today at 781.407.0300 to discover how we can help you deliver a solid future for your business.



Marty Kirshner, CPA, MSA



Carl Kaplan, MBA

FuelExchange
Propane M&A Services

gray

THE POWER OF MORE

Gray, Gray & Gray, LLP
CONSULTING • TAX • AUDIT & ASSURANCE • PRIVATE WEALTH
www.gggllp.com 781.407.0300

*Private wealth services provided by Gray Private Wealth, LLC.



TAURUS SYSTEMS INC.

*Celebrating Our
30th Year*

Many thanks to our dedicated employees, partners and especially our customers whose insight and experience help us create the best software for the Propane, Fuel Oil and Service Industries.



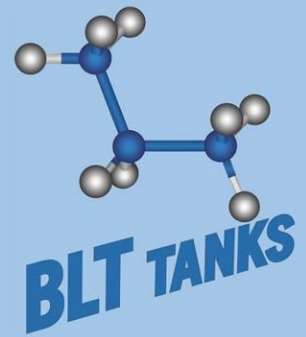
207 666-3167 • www.Taurus-Plus.com



BLT Tanks LLC

800-753-5467

BLTTanks.com



Celebrating 30 Years!

Selling & Refurbishing Propane Tanks Since 1994
100 % Family Owned, Operated, and Funded in the USA

Serving Oklahoma, surrounding states and nationwide locations.

All prices listed on our website are plus freight.

Prices and availability are subject to change.

Excellent condition, late year model barrels with fenders, pumps, meters & hose reels. Serviceable, sold as is.



We offer quality rebuilt, used, and new tanks at volume discounts to commercial customers.
At BLT Tanks our customers are our priority, and that is as true today as it has always been.

Limited Warranty on all Rebuilt tanks. Call for domestic tank prices.

Spring Sale! 250 gallon Rebuilt Underground Tank \$1350
330 gallon Rebuilt Underground Tank \$1650

DAVIS AIRTECH

We're interested in purchasing your surplus register cores



VEEDER-ROOT
7890 for \$75
7887 for \$50

We will also purchase Neptune cores

Call toll-free
800-257-7545
www.davisairtech.com

**USED 18K & 30K
BULK STORAGE TANKS FOR SALE**

Tanks are located in MO & WI

Northland Gas Equipment
877-755-3065
info@northlandgas.com

PROPANE TANK LABELS

Permanent outdoor vinyl labels for propane tanks and equipment for identifying accounts, displaying logos, and providing safety information.

PROPERTY OF:
TRI-STATE PROPANE
479-787-5400

PROPERTY OF:
BLUE FLAME PROPANE
1-888-555-5555

PURSELL
energy
555-555-5555 PURSELLENERGY.COM
Another Quality Installation



WEHOF
FORMS
DIV. SUMMIT SYSTEMS, INC.
"Committed to Quality & Service"

Visit FormsPro.net
or call 800-221-1209
for current pricing

FELKER TRUCK AND EQUIPMENT INC

Full Service Propane and Refined Fuel Truck Sales & Service Center
Specializing In...

- Propane and Fuel Oil Truck Sales
- Chassis Switches
- Truck Testing, Maintenance & Repair
- On-Site Meter Calibration & Repairs in WI, IL, MN & MI
- Bulk Storage Plant Installation
- Standby System Installation

Call today for a Truck quote!



Dale, WI ■ 920-779-9826
www.felkertruck.com

**To place your ad in our classifieds section,
contact Landen Franklin at
lfranklin@cahabamedia.com.**

ARROW
TANK AND ENGINEERING CO.

FAMILY OWNED • MIDWEST BASED • 60+ YEARS IN BUSINESS
NEW • USED • REFURBISHED



BOBTAILS



TRANSPORTS



STORAGE

CODE REPAIRS • REFURBISHING • TESTING AND INSPECTIONS • EXPERT ADVICE • COMPETITIVE PRICING

Email us at propane@arrowtank.com or call 888-892-7769 • www.arrowbobtails.com

SEND YOUR FEEDBACK

to the BPN editorial team at
bpneditorial@cahabamedia.com.

Find more content
at bpnews.com.



Rural Computer Consultants, Inc.

Since 1979, RCC's Fuel Distribution Software and exceptional customer support have paved the way to becoming a leader in the fuel and propane industry.

FOR FUEL PEOPLE BY FUEL PEOPLE

800-722-6659 | rccbi.com

LPG SYSTEM DESIGN & ENGINEERING

- INSTALLATION & MAINTENANCE SERVICES
- TRANSPORTATION
- BULK TANK SALES



HILTZ
PROPANE SYSTEMS



ph. 717.799.4322
www.hiltzpropanesystems.com



SOLUTIONS · EXPERTS · QUALITY · SUPPORT

Delivering Innovative Solutions

For Your Toughest Applications

CUSTOM-BUILT PROPANE BOBTAILS,
STELLAR LPG SERVICE TRUCKS

- New trucks
- Refurbished trucks
- Repairs
- Switchovers
- Parts



Serving the West for over 40 years!
CALL FOR A FREE QUOTE (800) 350-9030

Preview our online truck gallery
PacificTruckTank.com

7029 Florin-Perkins Road
Sacramento, CA USA

Visit our partner TankMaxNW.com



COMPUTER TICKETS
CUSTOM FORMS
POUCH MAILERS
EZE-SNAP METER TICKETS
LABELS, TAGS
www.degreeday.com

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

Closing Dates: Insertion orders or deletions must be in the Birmingham, Alabama, office by the 8th of the month preceding issue date. Send all materials to **lfranklin@cahabamedia.com** or call 205-278-2875. Remittance must accompany order.

Display Classified: \$145 per col. inch, 1 time; \$125 per col. inch, 6 times; \$115 per col. inch, 12 times. Display type will be used for heading. Ads will be set with 1 pt. border. *Publisher will set for maximum effect in space purchased.*

Blind Box Replies: If a blind box care of Butane-Propane News is used, add \$35 to regular ad rates. All replies to blind box number ads should be addressed to **classified@bpnews.com** or Butane-Propane News, P.O. Box 530067, Birmingham, AL 35253-0801.

Please include dept. number of ad on envelope.



Sumter Coatings™
PROTECT YOUR INVESTMENTS
www.sumtercoatings.com

GLOSS RETENTION | DURABILITY | COLOR RETENTION

Call for a distributor nearest you.
Toll Free **888-471-3400**
2410 Highway 15 South
Sumter, South Carolina 29150

ADVERTISER INDEX

Advertiser

Page

Alliance AutoGas.....	49
American Standard Mfg.....	14
Anova.....	18
BLT Tanks LLC.....	60
Cargas.....	11
EDP.....	37
ELAFLEX Pacific PTY LTD.....	19
Ferrellgas.....	9
Fisk Tank Carrier.....	IFC
Full-Circle Inc.....	58
Gray, Gray & Gray LLP.....	59
H&H Sales Company.....	44
ICOM North America.....	52
IPS Equipment Inc.....	26
Lock America Inc.....	56
LPG & NH3 Supply Inc.....	53
Marshall Excelsior.....	40

Metsa Tanks.....	15
One-Tank.....	22,23
Otodata Inc.....	1
Propane Education & Research Council.....	3
Quality Steel Corporation.....	5
RegO Products/ECII.....	BC
Renaldo Sales & Service Inc.....	58
ROUSH CleanTech.....	43
Smith Pumps.....	7
Star Group.....	50
Suburban Propane.....	27
Superior Energy Systems.....	56
Taurus Systems Inc.....	59
Teeco Products Inc.....	IBC
TerraVest Industries.....	30,31
TRIARC TANK.....	45
Westmor Industries LLC.....	41

John Peña

Director of Education
Southeast Propane Alliance
Technical Education Center



Describe your current role at your company. I am overall responsible for the day-to-day operations of our institution. I ensure our training is safe and follows industry regulatory requirements according to national and state policies. Additional [roles and responsibilities] include innovation to ensure that Southeast Propane Alliance Technical Education Center (SEPATEC) creates training opportunities as requested by our stakeholders and industry members; facilities manager; safety compliance manager; school certifying official for the Department of Veterans Affairs education; and workforce development for students new to the propane industry.

What was the genesis for NCTEC and now SEPATEC? The former North Carolina Propane Gas Association saw fitting to be at the forefront of the propane industry by developing the first institution dedicated to professionally educating, training and certifying new and current industry members to work in a wide array of positions in the industry. In 2021, the North Carolina Technical Education Center (NCTEC) became a North Carolina licensed community college and the only institution in the United States with a complete propane curriculum. Creating a state-of-the-art training facility in Graham, North Carolina, was solely intended to effectively train individuals to professionally execute their duties in a safe manner and prevent accidents. In January 2022, the North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia Propane Gas Associations merged, forming the Southeast Propane Alliance (SEPA), and it was fitting to change the [training center] name to SEPATEC.

What are your main objectives in leading SEPATEC? Key to being a successful propane institution is understanding and constantly adapting to code and regulatory changes, [the] latest propane technology, and innovation, including frequently meeting with industry members to determine employee training needs and requirements. Our curriculum today is not the same as when we began instructing in April 2021. My staff and I continue to study our curriculum, regulatory changes [to better] understand what our members require and as a result our curriculum and programs evolve

to meet our industry's training needs. We have developed various programs to help any and every type of industry need from safety/technical training and delivery driver training to refresher training and entry-level driver training.

Is there an inspiring student story the industry should hear? One of the great aspects of my duties is workforce development. There is nothing I do that is more inspiring than when I contact a marketer and hear excitement in their voice when I share that we have their next highly trained employee ready to begin a career in propane. Even more satisfying is coaching students and preparing them to meet the employer. I get to mentor and prepare the students through every part of the interview process. Workforce development is key to SEPATEC in order to help our industry grow.

Who or what inspired you to pursue your current career? After serving 30 years on active duty in the U.S. Army, I wanted to serve in a role where I can help people and an organization grow. I never worked in propane, but when I was contacted about leading a new institution and helping it grow, I knew that with my professional military training and experience, I could quickly adapt and help our school and industry grow. It has been extremely challenging, but working closely with my supervisor, board members, instructors and industry members have helped us to understand our mission and how we need to remain adaptable and innovative for the future of propane.

What advice do you have for someone new to the industry? Propane is like any other successful industry — [it has a] bright future and companies that truly care about their employees and customers. One of the best quotes I've ever heard comes from one of our SEPA companies: "If you want to take care of your customers, take better care of your employees." This statement could not be any closer to the truth about our industry and the members I get to interact with.

Learn more about Peña — Find an extended version of this profile on our website at bpnews.com.



Here For The Propane Industry Since 1946

.....

Our **FOCUS** Is Serving You



Teeco has been serving the Propane Industry since 1946. In all those years, one thing that remains the same is our unwavering commitment to being there for our customers and our industry. We continue to work hard to bring you the products you need quickly and efficiently, as well as offering free online training opportunities so you and your team can get the knowledge you need to use these products safely.

You can count on Teeco for the best equipment, knowledgeable associates and professional services. Call us or visit us online or in person to let us know how we can help you.

.....

Teeco is a Proud Member of Our Local and National Propane Industry Associations



www.teecoproducts.com

Irvine, CA

Sacramento, CA

Auburn, WA

Rapid City, SD



PART OF OPW | a **DOVER** company

New! RegO® Soft Seat Back Checks SSA3186, SSA3196 & SSA3197 Series

Features & Benefits:

- **Soft Seat** synthetic rubber seat disc for positive seals
- **Molded Seat & Retainer** captures the seat disc in place to ensure positive placement
- Design based on the well-proven A3276BC Back Pressure Check Valve
- **Heavy-duty Stainless-Steel** construction for long service life and durability in heavy duty applications
- **Generous Flow Channels** for low pressure drop
- Rated to **400 psig Maximum Allowable Working Pressure**



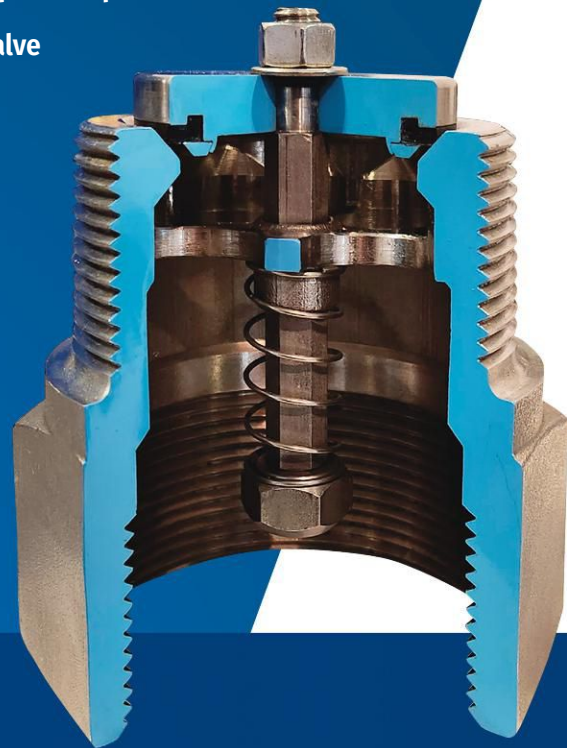
SSA3186



SSA3196

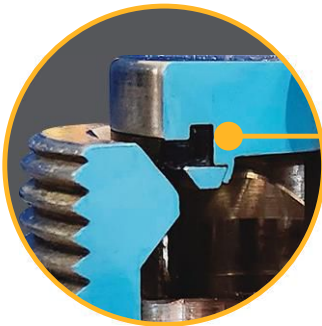


SSA3197



RegO Back Checks are designed to provide protection of a container opening when desired flow is always into the vessel. May be used in line applications where flow must be limited to one direction.

Designed and suitable for use in various Bobtail and Bulk plant application

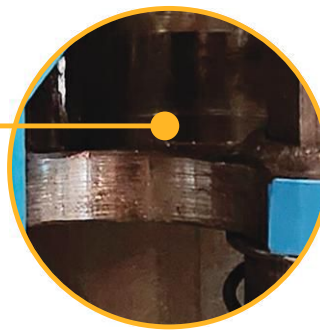


Molded Seat & Retainer

Molded Seat & Retainer captures the seat disc in place to ensure positive placement

Generous Flow Channels

Generous flow channels for low pressure drop



Scan here to download
the latest Featured
Products Brochure

