

DECEMBER 2025

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WILL THE SUN SET ON NEW YORK'S PROPANE BAN?

How the state's pause on the ban could bode well
for propane + NYPGA's fall meeting efforts

Palmer Gas & Oil on
Introducing Renewable
Propane to Southern
New Hampshire

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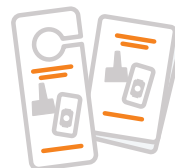
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Dear Readers,
For nearly six years, BPN has published the Verbatim column, in which Nancy Coop asks members of the industry for their honest — and sometimes vulnerable or even delightfully goofy — responses to questions each month. It all started in 2020 when former BPN Publisher Natalie Peal asked Nancy if she'd be

interested in providing content for the magazine.

"After some thought about my dear friend's request, I decided on a column that would mimic the 'heard on the street' format we've all seen on TV," said Nancy. "Natalie liked the idea, and I invited a couple dozen industry colleagues to respond to the first question. Verbatim was launched in the March 2020 edition.

"This year marks the completion of nearly six years of providing provocative, sometimes strange or even silly questions to propane people who have responded with entertaining, thoughtful, simple or deep words that readers enjoyed. These brave souls are honest and share their real and often clever thoughts month after month. They are the reason Verbatim is a success," she continued.

We're thankful to all Nancy has done through Verbatim. Connections are important to this industry, and Verbatim is an opportunity to foster that connection among our peers from afar. When BPN was acquired by Cahaba Media Group in 2021 and our current team entered the picture, Nancy was one of our earliest connections in the industry, providing us with advice, mentorship and friendship. We will forever be grateful to her and wish her much relaxation in her retirement! You can learn more about Nancy's legacy in our Industry Insider profile on page 56.

As we say goodbye (for now) to Nancy, we are pleased to announce a new voice for Verbatim. Whitney Parsley has agreed to take on the mantle starting with our January 2026 issue. Whitney is a corporate paralegal with 20-plus years of specialty in governance and M&A, and has been with Cetane Associates (and a colleague of Nancy's) for the past two years.

"Whitney is the best possible person to take over this column," said Nancy. "She has the heart and is a great writer and communicator. ... Thanks to her and the continued support of BPN, Verbatim shall keep delivering human interest items to the propane industry's loyal readers."

"I am completely honored and flattered that Nancy thinks I am the perfect person to continue her legacy. I have big shoes to fill, but I am up for the challenge and won't let you all down," Whitney told BPN.

We welcome Whitney into the fold at BPN and look forward to the insightful responses she will evoke from our Verbatim cohort.

Until next time,

Jessica S. Phillips

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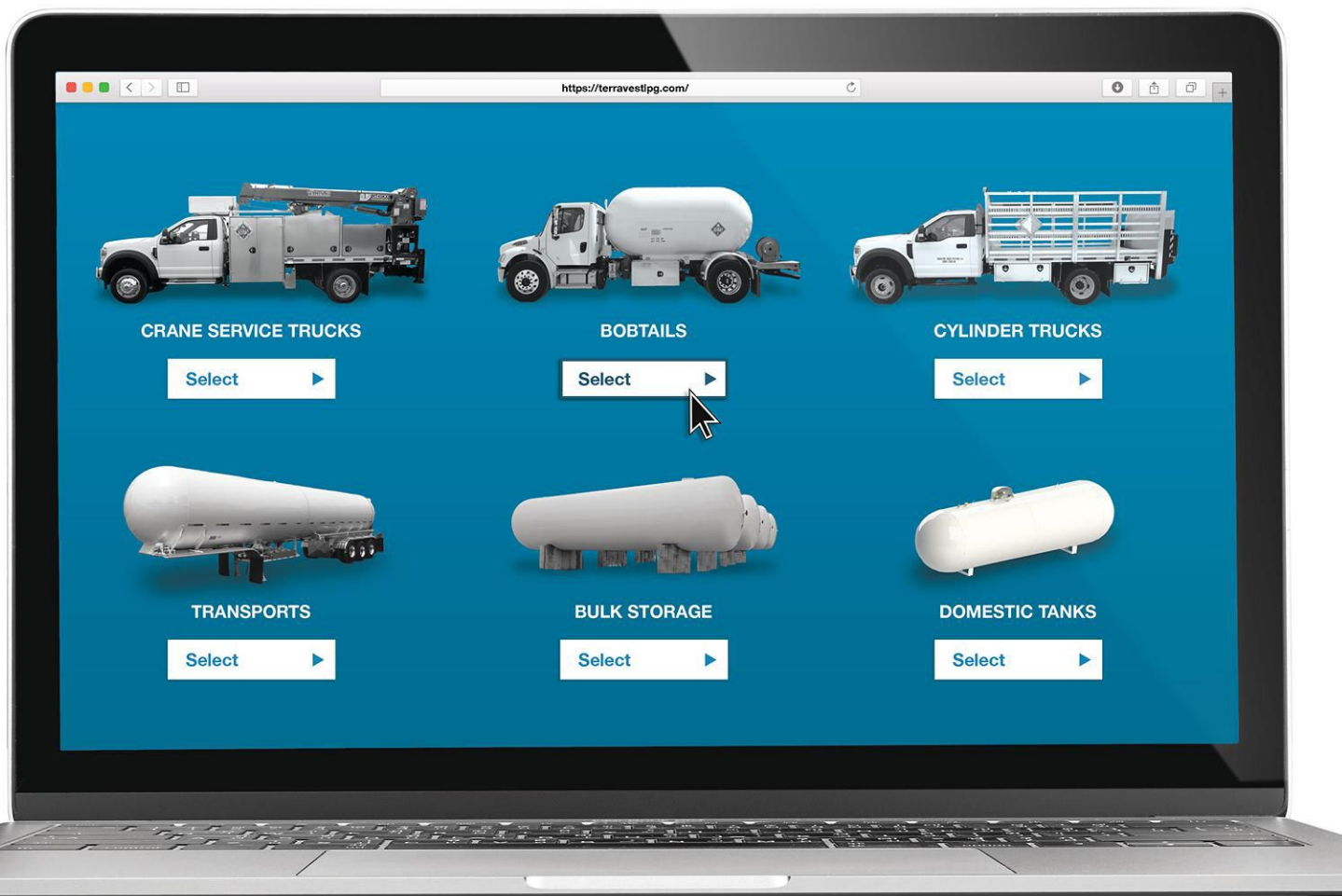
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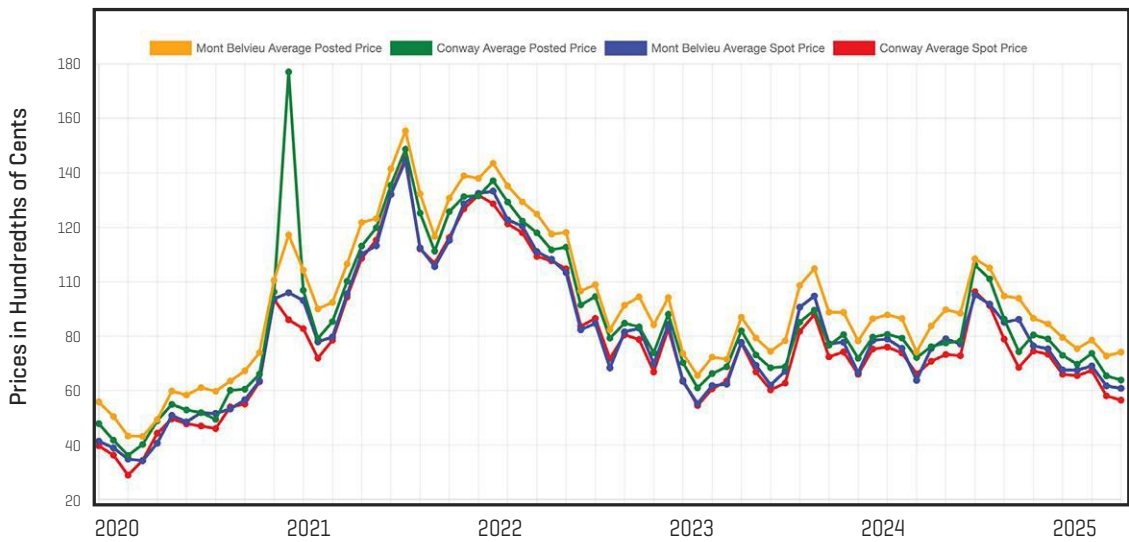
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MONT BELVIEU & CONWAY AVERAGE THURSDAY PROPANE PRICES



at a glance During the latest mid-month period, prices at Mont Belvieu, Texas, increased. The posted prices increased 1.417 cents/gal, from October mid-month to November mid-month, and spot prices decreased 1.125 cents. Conway, Kansas, postings decreased 1.543 cents/gal and spots decreased 1.375 cents over the month.

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

	10/16/25	10/23/25	10/30/25	11/6/25	11/13/25
Mont Belvieu					
posted	72.730	73.314	75.564	71.897	74.147
spot	61.625 - 61.875	63.750 - 64.125	64.875 - 65.125	57.250 - 58.000	60.500 - 61.125
Conway					
posted	65.413	63.497	64.580	62.913	63.870
spot	57.125 - 59.000	58.250 - 59.250	58.375 - 58.875	55.750 - 56.500	55.750 - 57.250

at a glance Canada’s primary underground propane inventories increased by 0.3% in October, according to the Canada Energy Regulator [CER]. The total represented a month-to-month increase of 4.2 Mcm. Compared to a year earlier, stocks were lower, with 52.3 Mcm, or 3.2%, less product on hand. *[Editor’s Note: Due to BPN’s publishing schedule, October inventory data is the latest available from the CER.]*

CANADIAN INVENTORIES (Thousand Cubic Meters)

	Oct. 2025	Sept. 2025	Change	Oct. 2024
PROPANE				
Propane-East	486.3	501.3	-3%	541.1
Propane-West	1117	1097.8	1.8%	1114.5
Total Propane	1603.3	1599.1	0.3%	1655.6
BUTANE				
Butane-East	532.7	583.9	-8.8%	578.8
Butane-West	794.8	887.8	-10.5%	526.2
Total Butane	1327.6	1471.7	-9.8%	1105

Source: Canada Energy Regulator

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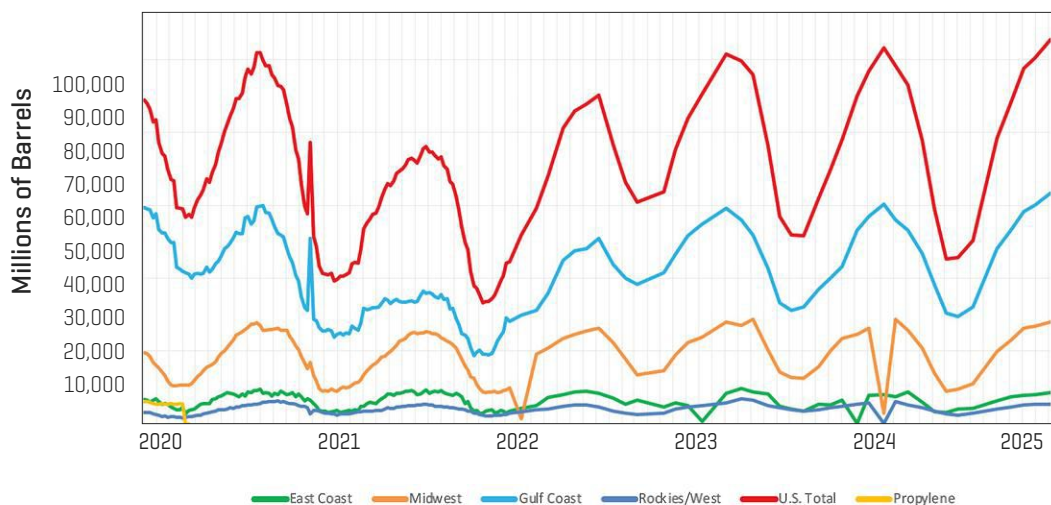


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U.S. PROPANE INVENTORIES



at a glance

United States propane stocks experienced a 3.027 MMbbl increase from October to November. East Coast stocks decreased 296,000 bbl, the Midwest increased 947,000 bbl, the Gulf Coast increased 2.353 MMbbl, and the Rocky Mountain/ West Coast increased 23,000 bbl. Compared to the same time in November 2024, the November 2025 stocks were 7.035 MMbbl higher.

U.S. PROPANE INVENTORIES

Oct. 10 – Nov. 7, 2025, and One Year Ago [Thousand Barrels]

	10/10/25	10/17/25	10/24/25	10/31/25	11/7/25	11/8/24
East Coast	8.927	8.844	9.347	9.718	8.631	7.434
Midwest	27.063	27.959	28.196	27.891	28.010	28.767
Gulf Coast	60.914	60.925	62.592	63.119	63.267	56.067
Rocky Mtn & West Coast	5.472	5.448	5.545	5.366	5.495	6.099
U.S.	102.376	103.175	105.681	106.094	105.403	98.368

U.S. RESIDENTIAL PROPANE PRICES

[Mid-Month, Cents per Gallon]

	Oct. 2025	Nov. 2025	Nov. 2024
East Coast [PADD 1]	332.5	334.5	336.3
Midwest [PADD 2]	191.5	194.9	196.3
Average U.S.	242.5	244.9	247.1

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

Find out more:

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

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- Tom Sigler
Owner, Eastern Sierra Propane



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WLGA ANNOUNCES NEW PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT



Donal
Murphy



A.S.
Sahney

The World Liquid Gas Association (WLGA) announced the appointment of a new president

and vice president. WLGA welcomed Donal Murphy, chief executive of DCC plc in Ireland, to the position of WLGA president. WLGA also welcomed A.S. Sahney, chairman of the Indian Oil Corporation, to the position of vice president. Murphy was appointed as WLGA president for a tenure of two years during the 2025 WLGA general assembly, which took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on Sept. 23. WLGA also expressed thanks to the outgoing president, Tabajara Bertelli Costa, CEO at Ultragas, Brazil, for his role in supporting and leading the association as president since March 2024. "It's an honour to serve as president of the WLGA at such a pivotal moment for our industry," said Murphy. "Liquid gas — and particularly renewable liquid gas — has a vital role to play in the global energy transition. Over the next two years, I look forward to working closely with our members and partners across the energy ecosystem to strengthen regional engagement and foster collaboration that drives real-world decarbonization." "It is a great honor to be able to serve the WLGA as its vice president," said Sahney. "India's LPG journey, powered by the Ujjwala Yojana and covering over 99% of Indian households, demonstrates how inclusive policy and strong infrastructure can transform lives."

LAKES GAS ADDS EXPERIENCED LEADERS TO BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Gayle
Hayhurst



Joe
Coughlin

Lakes Gas, a propane provider in the Upper Midwest, announced the appointment of Gayle Hayhurst

and Joe Coughlin to its board of directors. The new Lakes Gas board members bring

extensive experience and leadership that will be invaluable as the company continues to grow and serve its customers. Hayhurst brings over 30 years of experience as a C-suite executive in corporate finance and human resources. Hayhurst is known for her strategic perspective, ability to build strong relationships and teams, and drive results. Hayhurst was recognized as a Top Woman in Business by MSP Business Journal in 2018. She has held senior executive roles in a variety of companies, including Pillsbury, General Mills, Best Buy and Schwan's Food Company. She most recently served as the chief human resources officer for Schwan's Home Delivery and currently sits on the finance committee for the Lafayette Club. Hayhurst holds an undergraduate degree in quantitative methods and marketing, along with a master's in financial management from the University of St. Thomas. Coughlin joins the board with more than 30 years of business experience as a C-level executive and corporate director. He is recognized as a results-driven, customer-centric leader with a proven track record across both public and private companies. Coughlin was recognized as the MSP Business Journal's 2020 CFO of the Year in the public company sector. A board member for EDCO Products currently, he has also served in C-level executive roles at Ergotron, Twin City Fan Companies LTD. and BERMO Inc. Coughlin holds a bachelor's degree in accounting from the University of St. Thomas.

PERC EXPANDS PROPANE AUTOGAS VEHICLE INSPECTION GRANT PROGRAM

As fleets continue to shift away from diesel and toward cleaner, reliable energy sources, a new generation of skilled automotive service technicians is needed to maintain alternative fuel vehicles, like those running on propane autogas. The Propane Autogas Vehicle Inspection Grant Program, offered by the Propane Education & Research Council (PERC), is providing schools across the country with valuable training and resources

needed to prepare students to work on propane autogas buses, trucks, vans and more. This innovative grant program provides United States educational institutions with up to \$7,500 in funding to integrate propane-specific curriculum and equipment into their existing automotive training programs. The goal is to equip students with real-world experience maintaining and servicing vehicles powered by propane autogas. These skills are increasingly in demand as more fleets turn to propane autogas to reduce emissions and costs while maintaining operational efficiency. "The Propane Autogas Vehicle Inspection Grant Program gives students an opportunity to learn these technologies in-depth, preparing them for successful careers after graduation supporting fleets that are increasingly turning to propane autogas," said Joel Stutheit, senior manager of autogas business development at PERC. Now in its second year, the grant program has already supported 24 schools in 16 states, training hundreds of students to inspect, service and maintain propane autogas engine systems. Each participating school receives propane-specific curriculum, as well as funding to purchase propane autogas training equipment and to send an instructor to a "Train the Trainer" course. Eligible institutions must already offer an automotive program. Today, more than 60,000 propane autogas vehicles are in operation across the U.S., providing dependable service to transit agencies, delivery companies, emergency response fleets, utility crews and more. Propane autogas produces up to 96% fewer nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions than diesel. The application window is open through Dec. 19. To learn more about the grant program or to apply, visit propane.com/autogasgrantprogram.

MID-NOVEMBER PROPANE PRICES DOWN FROM OCTOBER

During the latest mid-month period, prices at Mont Belvieu, Texas, decreased. The posted prices decreased 1.5 cents/gal, from October mid-month to November mid-month, while the spot prices

decreased 3.875 cents. Conway, Kansas, postings decreased 4.333 cents/gal, and spots decreased 5.5 cents over the month. The Mont Belvieu mid-October posted price was 75.647 cents/gal. The next week the price decreased 2.917 cents to 72.73 cents/gal, followed by a 0.584-cent increase to 73.314 cents/gal. Prices then increased 2.25 cents to 75.564 cents/gal the following week. Postings decreased 3.667 to 71.897 cents/gal the first week of November. At mid-month, postings increased by 2.25 cents to 74.147 cents/gal. Compared to the same time in November 2024, the November 2025 prices were 15.583 cents lower. The Conway mid-October posted price was 68.203 cents/gal. The next week the price decreased 2.79 cents to 65.413 cents/gal, followed by a 1.916-cent decrease to 63.497 cents/gal. Prices then increased 1.083 cents to 64.58 cents/gal the following week. Postings decreased 1.667 cents to 62.913 cents/gal the first week of November. At mid-month, postings increased 0.957 cents to

62.913 cents/gal. Compared to the same time in November 2024, the November 2025 prices were 13.606 cents lower. Mont Belvieu spots opened mid-October at 64.375 cents/gal. The next week the price decreased by 2.75 cents to 61.625 cents/gal, followed by a 2.125-cent increase to 63.75 cents/gal the next week. Prices then increased 1.125 cents to 64.875 cents/gal the following week. Spots decreased 7.625 cents to 57.25 cents/gal the first week of November. At mid-month, they increased 3.25 cents to 60.5 cents/gal. Compared to the same time in November 2024, the November 2025 prices were 18.375 cents lower. Conway spots opened mid-October at 61.25 cents/gal. The next week the price decreased 4.125 cents to 57.125 cents/gal, followed by a 1.125-cent increase to 58.25 cents/gal the next week. Prices then increased 0.125 cents to 58.375 cents/gal. Spots decreased 2.625 cents to 55.75 cents/gal the first week of November. At mid-month, they remained flat. Compared to the same time in November 2024, the

November 2025 prices were 17.25 cents lower.

PARACO GAS ACQUIRES NORTH SHORE BOTTLED GAS IN NEW YORK

Paraco Gas has acquired North Shore Bottled Gas, expanding its footprint and service capabilities across New York. As one of the nation's largest privately held propane marketers, Paraco Gas continues to strengthen its presence and commitment to providing exceptional service throughout the region. "After many years of working closely with North Shore, we're truly grateful for the opportunity to continue what they've built," said Christina Armentano, chief operating officer and executive vice president of Paraco Gas. "We have great respect for their business and for family-owned companies that put people and community at the heart of everything they do." North Shore Bottled Gas was founded by Bob Burger in 1988. Under his leadership, the company has grown

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steadily, earning a stellar reputation for outstanding service, safety and community commitment. This marks Paraco's second acquisition of 2025, continuing the company's long-standing growth strategy built on operational excellence and alignment with other family-owned businesses. To date, Paraco has completed more than 60 acquisitions, with the majority being family-run propane companies that share the values of safety, service and community focus.

TERRAVEST INDUSTRIES APPOINTS NEW CFO

TerraVest Industries Inc. announced the appointment of Guillaume Cloutier as chief financial officer (CFO), to succeed Marilyn Boucher. "On behalf of the executive team and board of directors, I would like to thank Ms. Boucher, who has been an integral part of the team and played an important role in our growth since she joined the company in 2017. Ms. Boucher has built a solid finance function for TerraVest, and we will benefit from that for years to come. We wish her continued success in her future endeavors," said Dustin Haw, CEO of TerraVest. Cloutier is a highly accomplished executive with extensive experience in finance, strategy and business transformation. He has held senior leadership positions in several industry-leading manufacturing businesses across North America. "I would like to welcome Mr. Cloutier to the TerraVest team. He is a dynamic leader with deep expertise in finance and operations, and his experience will be invaluable as we continue to grow TerraVest," said Haw.

LEGACY ENERGY CONSULTING NAMES NEW DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT



Dustin
Shafer

experience from owning and operating a

Dustin Shafer has joined Legacy Energy Consulting to lead strategic planning initiatives and support clients with growth and M&A services. Shafer, 36, brings 15 years of invaluable

successful retail propane business in Southern California, which he built from the ground up to serve over 3,500 residential customers. His expertise in the retail propane sector will be instrumental in supporting Legacy Energy Consulting's clients, whether they are looking to sell their business or optimize and grow their operations through their strategic planning services. Upon accepting this new position, Shafer expressed his enthusiasm for joining the team at Legacy Energy Consulting, acknowledging the value of their partnership throughout the transition from his previous business. He looks forward to assisting clients as they make important decisions like those he faced during his own business exit and is committed to leveraging his experience in building a successful enterprise to help clients achieve continued growth. As director of business development, Shafer will be involved with all aspects of the M&A services provided by Legacy Energy Consulting and will lead the strategic planning services, leveraging his experience to assist clients with business decisions and achievement goals.

WESTMOR INDUSTRIES ADDS CONNOR HOLT AS TERRITORY MANAGER



Connor
Holt

Westmor Industries has added Connor Holt as territory manager for the company's truck and trailer division. In this role, Holt will serve customers in the propane and petroleum industries throughout Minnesota, offering expertise in bobtails, refined fuel trucks and crane service trucks. Holt brings over a decade of sales experience to the position, most recently working in the lubricant industry prior to transitioning to the propane industry in his new role. He is looking forward to utilizing Westmor's diverse product range to provide customers with customized solutions that fit their needs while providing exceptional service and support. "Connor's determination will enhance brand recognition and customer service in Minnesota, and I anticipate excellent

performance as Connor begins his new role," said Northwest Sales Manager Brady Griffith while expressing enthusiasm for Holt joining the Westmor sales team.

REPCO S.R.L. ACQUIRES ALL SHARES IN OILTECH

REPCo, a Milan-based joint venture between Cavagna Group and Nirmal Industrial Controls, has acquired all shares in Oiltech S.r.l, a company with over 20 years of experience in process engineering in the oil and gas and petrochemical sectors. Also based in Milan, Oiltech S.r.l. specializes in supporting large companies in the EPC (engineering, procurement, construction) and energy sectors, as well as manufacturers of skid-mounted plants. The transaction forms part of a strategic process aimed at strengthening REPCo's presence throughout the supply chain. Founded in 1993, REPCo S.r.l. operates in the energy sector, offering end-to-end solutions that cover the entire project cycle — from process engineering to supply and plant start-up. "Welcoming Oiltech into the company is an important step in our journey," said Davide Cavagna, CEO of Cavagna Group. "Our goal remains to continually expand our range of expertise so that we can support our customers not only in one or a few stages of the supply chain, but throughout all of them. This is certainly a challenging mission, but we are confident that, thanks to our new colleagues at Oiltech, it will be achievable." Prakash Desai, director of Nirmal Industrial Controls, said, "This acquisition represents an important step toward strengthening REPCo's presence in a sector that is now more crucial than ever. It is a highly technical and specialized field, where the professionalism and expertise of our people provide great added value to the solutions we offer — diversifying them and tailoring them to the needs of our partners and customers." This acquisition reinforces REPCo's commitment to investing in technical skills and professionalism by supporting its workforce and consolidating its position in the field of process engineering. 📌

Industry Calendar

Jan. 27-29 NPGA Winter Board of Directors, Committee & Section Meetings
npga.org
Las Vegas, NV

Feb. 11 PERC Council Meeting
propane.com
Virtual

March 2-4 NPGA Spring Technology, Standards & Safety Committee Meeting
npga.org
Tucson, AZ

March 12-13 NPGA Spring Benchmarking Meeting
npga.org
Long Beach, CA

March 25 New Jersey PGA Spring Board of Directors Meeting
njpga.org
Trenton, NJ

April 19-21 2026 Southeastern & International Propane Expo
npga.org
Nashville, TN

April 22 PERC Council Meeting
propane.com
Nashville, TN

May 19-20 PERC Advisory Committee Meeting
propane.com
Milwaukee, WI

June 7-9 NPGA Propane Days
npga.org
Washington, D.C.

June 24 New Jersey PGA Annual Board of Directors Meeting
njpga.org
Trenton, NJ

June 29-July 2 Alabama & Louisiana PGA Joint Meeting
alabamapropane.com
Pensacola Beach, FL

July 14-15 PERC Council Meeting
propane.com
Park City, UT

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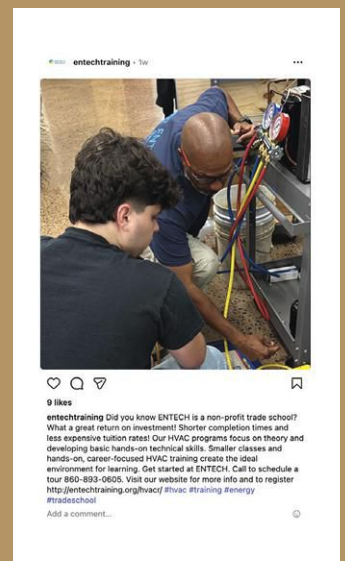
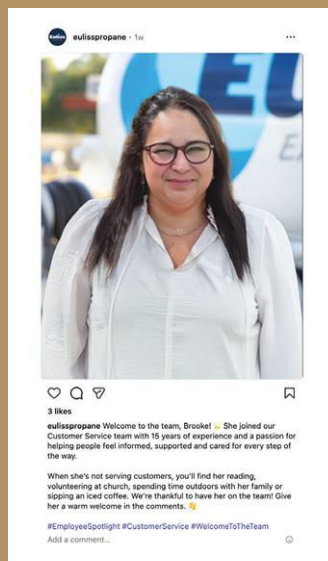
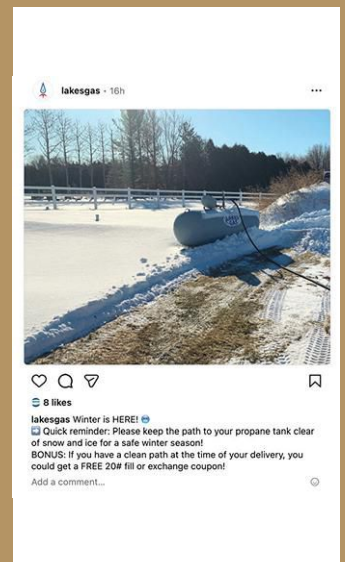
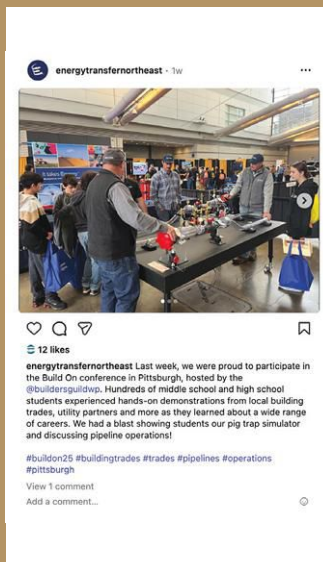
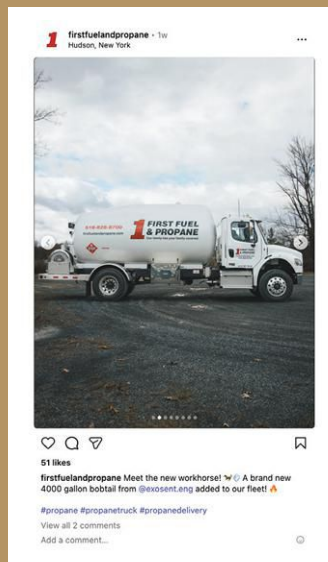


THE FUELING STATION

The fall and winter months are especially busy in the propane business. Not only are customer demands and needs usually at a high for the year, but the holiday season also keeps schedules full.

This winter season, in addition to preparing for colder weather and dramatic drops in temperature,

companies set aside time to gather and celebrate the holidays, including Veterans Day. Enjoy this look at how propane companies are appreciating community in the snowy season and how they paid homage to our country's many veterans — including those serving this industry.



A Family Affair.

Hear from father and son propane business owners
who both chose EDP when it was time to sell.



“My parents have spoken very highly of their experience selling to EDP and I’ve watched how EDP has taken excellent care of their employees and their customers. Plus, EDP has continued to grow the business. We wanted that same outcome from the sale of Mount Perry Propane.”

— Jordy Anderson

“Our experience selling Anderson Propane Services to EDP was very positive, so we were pleased to see Jordy and Sadie choose EDP when they decided to sell.”

— Danny Anderson



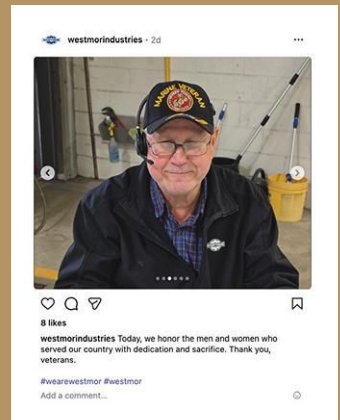
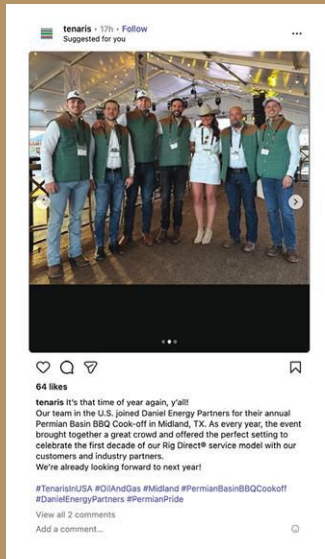
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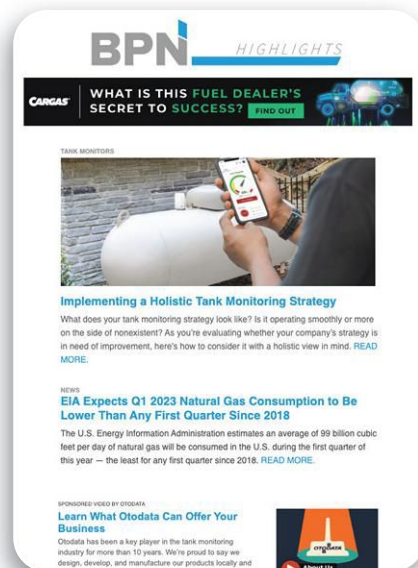




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Nancy Coop is an industry advocate. She is a director at the M&A advisory firm Cetane Associates. Contact Coop at ncoop@cetane.com. Visit cetane.com.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE TO DO FOR OTHERS?

Propane professionals share the heartfelt ways they give back through kindness, mentorship & community service

This month's question was chosen with the holiday season in mind. Clearly our colleagues do not limit their generosity to the holidays but have incorporated doing things for others into their daily lives year-round.

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.

P.S. There is a change coming to this column. Please read the closing remarks.

GIVING & HELPING OTHERS FROM THE HEART

Helping others has always been something I love to do. Growing up in a large Boston Irish Catholic family, we all helped each other. Also, as the oldest child, it is your responsibility. There are many things I do enjoy when helping others. However, my biggest joy is helping my family. Providing advice and leadership from my life experiences is very rewarding. Supporting my friends and family emotionally and physically during troubled times is very important. I also enjoy mentoring and training young people in our industry. Sharing my personal work experiences, good and bad, can be helpful to them to see

how much our industry has developed. I am encouraged and excited to see so many talented young people keeping the industry strong. In general, helping others is the right thing to do!

ED VARNEY
TOPLINE MANAGEMENT
MCKINNEY, TEXAS

If I had to pick one thing I love doing for others, it is to make people feel comfortable. That's especially true for people I meet for the first time. I can be pretty reserved and shy when I meet people, but I try to at least make them feel comfortable and put people at ease. It's certainly not a grand gesture by any means, and I'm unsure how successful I am at it. I believe any effort to make people feel comfortable, however, goes a long way to having healthy relationships. I think comfort goes hand in hand with psychological safety.

DON MONTROY
BERGQUIST INC.
ROCKFORD, MICHIGAN

Some of the ways I show love to my family are by spending time with them and celebrating special moments together. I love gathering with my family and extended family for birthdays and

other special occasions. I especially enjoy taking my family on vacations, teaching them new skills and cooking them home-cooked meals — though definitely not meatloaf (I learned my lesson!). I also try to offer advice when I can. I'm not always sure if I get it right, but it always comes from my heart. Most of all, I pray for my family and commit them to God, who sees and knows all. His care for us is greater than my own.

JULIE JOHNSON
TED JOHNSON PROPANE
BALDWIN PARK, CALIFORNIA

I first asked my kids this question to get their perspective of me. My kids said that I love to help and, well, sometimes annoy them. I do agree with them! Isn't that the parent's job, to annoy their children? They also hit the nail on the head that I do really enjoy helping others. I love to lend a listening ear or help solve a problem. A friend of mind once reminded me that 'we all have our stuff.' At any given moment, we're all experiencing the roller coaster of life's highs and lows. In those moments, if all it takes is a little extra empathy — I'm your gal!

ABBY THURSTON
RURAL COMPUTER CONSULTANTS
BIRD ISLAND, MINNESOTA



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AT WORK & IN THE COMMUNITY

This was a hard question to answer. I try to help others wherever I can, but some of the jobs I don't 'love.' I live in an area with a high percentage of retirees, so what they 'love' me to help with is slugging bags of mulch around, shoveling driveways, moving furniture, baking treats for the church and other assorted odd jobs. I'm happy to be of assistance to others; I don't know that I actually love all the tasks, LOL.

LESLIE WOODWARD

FAIRVIEW FITTINGS
OAKVILLE, ONTARIO, CANADA

I love making life a little easier for others. At home, I'm the planner who keeps things running smoothly. At work, I focus on solving problems so people can focus on what's important. Life can be stressful for everyone and easing some of that stress is my small way of showing care and kindness.

STACI RAMMEL
WOODRUFF ENERGY
BRIDGETON, NEW JERSEY

Doing things for or supporting others can include family and friends, coworkers, neighbors or even your local community. For me, personally, I like to give back

to my community in a variety of ways. I receive personal satisfaction knowing that I have made a contribution and/or participated in groups, events or activities for the benefit of others in our community. Volunteering time to coaching, mentorship, joining a committee, fundraising for a worthy cause, volunteering at a community garden or farm, cleaning up parks and trails, building playgrounds or athletic fields, participating in a charity walk or event and supporting various local organizations are a few examples. One of the benefits of volunteering is that all my grown children are doing similar things in their local communities, which makes me smile. It's better to give than receive!

JERRY SCHIMMEL

P3 PROPANE SAFETY
CUMBERLAND, RHODE ISLAND

I am part of a group that works with a nonprofit called Project Homes here in the Richmond area. Our group does house repairs, such as deck replacements, handrails for the elderly and other small house repairs for those who qualify based on income. Many of these clients have been living with these [challenges] possibly for years. When we provide a fix to their problem, it can be

even more gratifying to us than to them, I believe. I think this translates to my position in sales in providing solutions for customer needs. You know what they say: 'When you find a job that fits your skill set, you won't work another day in your life.' Just living the dream!

TOM KRUPA

NGL SUPPLY TERMINALS CO.
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

First thing that comes to mind is from the business side. That is when I explain things, so the person really understands and is interested in that information. Let's face it: A lot of people really do not understand what we all do with our profession. It gives me pride when people acknowledge and understand what was explained to them.

RICHARD STRYCHARZ JR.

WALTER'S PROPANE
SUNDERLAND, MASSACHUSETTS

GIFTS OF FOOD & HOSPITALITY

I was raised in the restaurant and hospitality business. Beyond inviting people into our home (it was a duplex; our house was on one side and the restaurant on the other side) to dine with us each evening, my mother loved to entertain family and friends. Our home

was always an open and welcoming place for cousins who would come to Vermont to ski or aunts and uncles coming to visit family. While my brother was blessed with the culinary talent, I got the hospitality bug. I have always lived in a home with enough bedrooms for family and friends. I've been very blessed in my lifetime and I'm a firm believer in 'to whom much is given much is required.' God has blessed me with enough to share, and it's one of the things that has always made my heart happy. Whether it's picking up a dinner tab or having company for the weekend, I love an opportunity to be a blessing to others.

JUDY TARANOVICH
PROCTOR GAS INC.
PROCTOR, VERMONT

Cook! My sister and I always joke that my love language is feeding people. Technically, it's acts of service — but for me, that usually means food. I love

to cook, to create delicious meals and to share them with others.

LAUREN CLARK
BERGQUIST INC.
TOLEDO, OHIO

What do I love to do for others? Cook!! Sunday dinners and holidays for family and friends. For 16 years, all the grandkids came to our house every morning for breakfast, and then their Poppy took them to school. Feeding people is just another way of showing love. If you cook it, they will come!

PAULA MOORE
BLACKBURN PROPANE SERVICE INC.
DURANT, OKLAHOMA

One thing I love to do for others is to pay for the meal when we are out eating together. It's a gesture I've seen many times from my parents when they invite friends and family out for meals, and it's a habit I have learned to pick up — and I

do get a joy out of doing it.

SAM FUNG
EMERSON AUTOMATION SOLUTIONS
MCKINNEY, TEXAS

GRATITUDE & A PERSONAL NOTE

For nearly six years, I've enjoyed selecting all types of questions for our colleagues to answer from their personal perspectives. It has been my joy to compile their thoughtful and often clever responses for you, our loyal reader. Thank you for turning to the "Verbatim" pages each month.

Beginning next month, my colleague, Whitney Parsley, will author this column. She will do an exceptional job and keep the column lively (read about Whitney in the editor's letter on page 2). I'm looking forward to retirement at the end of the month and am thrilled to know that Whitney will carry "Verbatim" forward with her positive personality and keen mind. 🍷



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David Schlee is an attorney practicing in Kansas City, Missouri. He has been representing propane and natural gas distributors in fire and explosion litigation since 1986, and has authored BPN's Propane & the Law column since September 1989. He can be reached at dschlee@dschleelaw.com.

LOUISIANA COURT SENDS PROPANE BOLLARD TRIP & FALL CASE TO JURY

The question remains whether a bolt in the ground would have been 'open & obvious' to the plaintiff who sustained injuries from the fall

It has been estimated that 10%-15% of all personal injury lawsuits in the United States involve a plaintiff who has tripped or slipped and fallen on someone else's property. These lawsuits are not typical in the propane industry, but such suits against propane suppliers do happen from time to time. A good and interesting example recently happened in Louisiana.

In a Sept. 26 decision, a Baton Rouge federal court denied a defense summary judgment motion in such a lawsuit against the Family Dollar retail chain and a propane distributor. The plaintiff had tripped and fallen next to a cylinder exchange storage rack. The case is *Stewart v. Family Dollar Inc.*

CYLINDER EXCHANGE CAGE

Cylinder exchange programs have been a key component of the propane industry since the 1990s. The programs offer customer convenience and enhanced safety by having the customer drop off an empty cylinder (typically a 20-pound cylinder often used with a barbecue grill) and picking up a prefilled cylinder from an exchange cage outside a retail store. The Family Dollar store in Jackson,

Louisiana, offered propane cylinder exchange to its customers. There was an exchange cage containing about 18 20-pound propane cylinders on the sidewalk near the front door of the store. The store's parking lot was next to this sidewalk, and customer vehicles were typically parked directly in front of the storage cage.

BOLLARDS

Since it was so close to the parking area, the storage cage, which contained multiple filled propane cylinders, needed protection from accidental vehicle impact. Accordingly, bollards were fastened to the sidewalk in front of the cage. A bollard is a strong steel cylinder, usually painted yellow, that is fastened in place to protect a structure from vehicle impact while still allowing pedestrian access to the structure.

In this case, the propane supplier installed two steel bollards, each painted yellow and 20 inches high, on the sidewalk in front of the cylinder storage rack at the Family Dollar store in Jackson. Each bollard was welded to a square steel plate that was then fastened into the sidewalk with four large bolts

positioned at each corner of the plate. These bolts extended about 2 inches above the level of the sidewalk. One of these bolts would become the central focus of an incident involving Florence Stewart.

UNWITNESSED FALL

On March 4, 2022, Stewart parked her car in the lot in front of the Family Dollar store. She entered the store and purchased some motor oil, which she took outside to her car and dispensed into the crankcase. She walked over to a trash receptacle that was next to the propane cylinder storage rack. After depositing the empty oil can in the receptacle, she started to walk back toward her car.

At this point, Stewart claims she tripped over a bolt that fastened one of the bollards to the sidewalk. She later testified that "when I turned to go to my car, a bolt caught my tennis shoe and caused me to lose my balance, and I fell face down." She claimed that her shoe struck the bolt with sufficient force that it punctured the canvas of the shoe. The incident was not witnessed. Stewart admitted that she saw the bollards as



she approached the trash receptacle but claimed that she “never saw the screws.” When asked what she was looking at after she turned back to her car after placing the trash in the can, she stated, “When I turned to go to my car — my car.”

OPEN & OBVIOUS?

Stewart was injured in the fall, and she filed suit against Family Dollar and the propane supplier, claiming the bollards, and specifically the protruding bolts that fastened them to the sidewalk, constituted an “unreasonably dangerous condition” on the premises of the Family Dollar store.

The defendants responded with a motion for summary judgment, denying that the bolts were unreasonably dangerous and arguing that, in any event, they were “open and obvious” to Stewart, and she could easily have avoided them. They added that the utility of the bollards and bolts greatly outweighed any danger posed by their installation.

Addressing the “open and obvious” issue, the court noted that Stewart had presented expert testimony on the typical actions of pedestrians:

“According to Ms. Stewart, once she put the trash in the can and turned to return to her car, she was not looking at the ground directly in front of her but rather was looking at her car. There is record expert testimony that “[p]edestrians typically scan ahead in the direction of their travel, not directly down at their own feet.” Thus, a reasonable inference can be drawn from this record evidence (and a reasonable jury could so conclude) that the bolt would not have been open and obvious to a reasonable shopper because the shopper’s eyes may have been focused on the trash on the ground and/or because the shopper, after turning to return to her car, would not have been looking down at her feet (and the bolt), but at her car.”

The court also found significance in the placement of the bollards in proximity to the storage rack and the trash receptacle:

“In addition, having placed the propane kiosk on the front sidewalk near the store’s entrances/exits, and then placed a garbage can near the kiosk, it is certainly reasonable to believe that Family Dollar expected (if not encouraged

and hoped for) its customers to walk in front of, view and shop for propane at the kiosk. Family Dollar would certainly have expected customers to put trash in the can placed there for that purpose by Family Dollar. Thus, a reasonable jury could conclude that the bolt would not have been open and obvious to a reasonable shopper because that shopper may have had her attention focused on the contents of the propane kiosk or the trash receptacle into which she intended to place trash.”

Based on this analysis, the court concluded there was sufficient conflicting evidence to allow a jury to decide whether the offending bolt was an “open and obvious” hazard that Stewart should have seen. The court likewise held that it was for a jury to decide whether the bollard and bolts were an unreasonably dangerous hazard and whether their utility was outweighed by any danger they presented.

The case is set for trial on Jan. 12, 2026. According to court filings, the parties are attempting to schedule a mediation prior to that time in an effort to reach a settlement. 📌



Roger Rosenbaum, president of Brand-News-Team, is a senior communication, marketing and public relations executive. His company guides propane marketers in strengthening customer engagement and brand positioning. He can be reached at roger@brand-news-team.com.

NEW YORK GAINS ‘BIG WIN’ OVER PROPANE BAN FOLLOWING NYPGA’S FALL CONFERENCE

The electrification movement’s legal speed bump + NYPGA’s hope for the future

The mood was gloomy when 90 gathered at the New York Propane Gas Association’s (NYPGA) fall conference in Saratoga Springs, New York, from Oct. 27-28. The issue: Environmental advocates and New York’s political leadership, they argued, were driving the state toward an electrified future that could leave propane behind.

“Propane remains essential for heating, cooking and hot water in thousands of communities beyond the reach of gas lines,” said Rick Cummings, vice president of the 100-year-old Mulhern Gas Company in Hudson and legislative director for NYPGA. “That’s not because people love propane. It’s because more and more communities depend on it.”

NYPGA President and Paraco Gas Chief Operating Officer (COO) Christina Armentano framed the industry’s challenge more positively and broadly.

“We, as an industry, want to make sure we’re able to continue to be that unsung hero for communities,” she said, “doing it in a reliable, affordable and safe way.”

What propane marketers are finding is that it is difficult to be apolitical in this current environment. In the past, marketers sought to stay neutral, with the focus on serving customers, not politics.

Energy reliability no longer feels like a central selling point of propane. At the moment, the outlook for propane in New York is unclear. With New York’s all-electric mandate for new construction under seven stories set to take effect Jan. 1, 2026, the industry had braced for a seismic shift that many believed could fundamentally alter their businesses.

There was also no guarantee that additional bans could be put into place following landmark legislation seeking to reduce fossil-fuel use and increase an “electrify-all” strategy.

CLCPA: 5 DIRTY WORDS?

New York state ignited the current fight in 2019 by passing the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) — one of the nation’s most aggressive climate laws with mandates aimed at “protecting New York’s natural resources, creating economic opportunities and ensuring a brighter future,” according to climate.ny.gov.

The statute requires a 40% cut in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and 100% zero-emission electricity by 2040, triggering a cascade of regulatory changes aimed at phasing out fossil fuels.

Those directives had the potential to become much more real on Jan. 1. New homes, apartments and mixed-use buildings would need to run on electric heat pumps and electric appliances. For many propane marketers at the conference, the state’s electrification push was not merely ambitious — it



Speakers at the NYPGA fall conference (from top left to bottom right): Christina Armentano, Mike Hopsicker, John Howard, Rick Cummings and Paul Palmesano

was not practical, safe or cost-effective.

“Now, instead of just taking on tough winters,” Cummings said, “we’re taking on political powers in New York state.”

Cummings made a federal case of it.

THE LEGAL FIGHT FOR FUEL

Mulhern Gas, joined by the New York State Builders Association, the National Propane Gas Association (NPGA) and other partners, filed suit this year in *Mulhern v. Rodriguez*, arguing that New York’s fossil-fuel equipment ban violates the United States Constitution.

“The plaintiffs sued the state of New York over statutes enacted in 2023 that require amendments to prohibit the installation of fossil-fuel equipment,” says a summary from NPGA.

The complaint hinges on the Supremacy Clause and precedent from the Ninth Circuit’s 2023 ruling overturning the gas ban in Berkeley,

California. Marketers celebrate the Berkeley case because the Ninth Circuit ruled that local or state regulations could not override the federal Energy Policy and Conservation Act of 1975. The act preempts state and local rules that effectively restrict the use of federally regulated appliances. The court held that Berkeley’s ban on gas hookups indirectly regulated the energy use of those appliances and therefore violated the act.

Though the U.S. District Court dismissed the Mulhern case in August, it did so without prejudice, allowing the plaintiffs to appeal.

‘A RUNAWAY FREIGHT TRAIN’

The urgency of the moment was echoed by speakers across the political spectrum, including Propane Education & Research Council (PERC) COO Bridget Kidd, energy policy veteran John Howard, and New York Assemblyman Paul Palmesano.

While Kidd focused on propane’s “whole-house” uses, the elected officials and policy experts cut directly into the political and economic realities.

“This thing is a runaway freight train heading down the tracks, and the public really doesn’t have an idea yet of what’s coming,” Palmesano said. “It’s going to hit families, small businesses and farmers hard if we don’t slow this down.”

“Utility rates are already skyrocketing,” he said. “You don’t need a hearing to recognize that people can’t afford what’s happening. It’s economic insanity.”

John Howard, a Democrat and longtime state energy adviser, offered a blunt assessment of what he calls a policy race divorced from physics.

“What’s driving this policy isn’t physics — it’s politics,” he said. “When the CLCPA passed, it became a race among states to see who could decarbonize first — 2050, 2040, 2030,

tomorrow. It stopped being about science and started being about bragging rights.”

He estimated that 400,000 New Yorkers — largely in rural counties — could lose heating options or fall into energy poverty.

A SURPRISE TURN OF EVENTS

While at the NYPGA conference, propane marketers had no idea that just two weeks later — on Nov. 12 — the state would announce a pause in the enforcement of the ban until every legal challenge and appeal had been exhausted.

For Cummings, the announcement marked a turning point and proved his point. After months spent in courtrooms, policy meetings and late-night calls with attorneys, he called the pause a “big win.”

Several legal, political, economic and grid reliability issues put significant pressure on New York Democratic Gov. Kathy Hochul, who is running for reelection in 2026. Hochul has said energy affordability is important to her, and she agreed to review current policies.

The Hochul administration is getting pressure from all sides. Four environmental and climate justice groups filed a lawsuit in 2025 to push the state to enforce the CLCPA’s core mandates.

THE NOVEMBER DECISION: A PAUSE LINKED TO MULHERN V. RODRIGUEZ

The decision to pause the Jan. 1 ban was directly tied to the aforementioned Mulhern v. Rodriguez lawsuit. The case argues that New York’s ban conflicts with the federal Energy Policy and Conservation Act, which preempts state appliance-fuel mandates.

Although the district court dismissed Mulhern’s initial filing without prejudice, the pause grants the industry what it lacked in October: time. The case is now expected to be heard by the Second Circuit Court of Appeals in early summer 2026, with Cummings saying it will go to the United States Supreme Court, if necessary. To further complicate matters regarding the CLCPA, a New York state Supreme Court judge ruled that the state’s Department of Environmental

Conservation (DEC) could not dodge CLCPA regulations just because they were costly or “complicated.”

FROM CONCERNING TRENDS TO ENERGY CHOICE VICTORY

Back at the late-October NYPGA conference, Armentano tapped into a trend that caught many attendees’ attention — a surge in electric rates since CLCPA’s passage.

“One really interesting statistic brought up today was that electric rates were 17 cents when CLCPA was introduced, and now they’re at 25 cents,” she said. “That huge differential is going to have a significant impact on people’s pocketbooks.”

Cummings sees the issue as one of practicality, not ideology.

“It’s not that we’re against progress,” he said. “We’ve always evolved. But this mandate doesn’t account for the realities of weather, infrastructure or affordability in places like Buffalo or the North Country.

“This is policy without practicality,” he added.

When the Nov. 12 announcement came through, for Armentano, it represented the breakthrough the industry had been hoping for yet didn’t dare expect at the October meeting.

“New York’s all-electric building mandate is officially on pause, a major victory for energy choice and for every New Yorker who values reliability and

affordability,” she said. “Our coalition’s unified effort shows the strength of our industry when we stand together for practical, balanced energy policy.”

She added that the pause validates the work of NPGA, NYPGA and grassroots propane leaders.

“This outcome proves the power of a united industry — when NPGA, NYPGA and our local propane leaders speak with one voice, real change happens.”

But she cautioned that the fight is far from over.

“We’re committed to fighting for balanced, reliable and affordable energy solutions for all New Yorkers. This is an important step, but the work continues.”

OCTOBER WARNINGS FEEL SHARPER AFTER THE PAUSE

Speakers at the October conference had already raised concerns about cost, grid stability and the pace of electrification:

- **Electric rates**, as mentioned by Armentano, have climbed from 17 cents/kWh (when CLCPA passed) to 25 cents today.
- **The New York Independent System Operator (NYISO)**, a not-for-profit organization that manages the reliability and safety of the electric grid, warned in two recent reports of “profound reliability challenges,” driven by electric vehicles, data centers and building electrification, as well as aging power plants.
- **Local grids**, Howard noted, are “over



Leaders gathering to speak at NYPGA’s conference

60 years old, and the weakest in the country. When policymakers say, 'The grid will handle it,' they're not talking about January in Buffalo."

Assemblyman Palmesano expressed deep concern: "You can't shut down proven, reliable power sources before you've built new ones to replace them. That's turning off the bridge before you build the new one."

Richard Goldberg of Warm Thoughts Communications warned attendees that affordability concerns could turn customer sentiment quickly. Goldberg created the Energy Smart New York Campaign — a website that saw over 100,000 visitors, as well as videos served on social media that he said have been viewed 1 million times in the last year.

According to Goldberg, polling shows New Yorkers share affordability concerns. Even before recent rate increases, only one-third of residents said they were

willing to pay more than \$500 a year for climate initiatives.

It is in the best interest of the customer, state and industry "to really push back," Goldberg said at the NYPGA fall meeting. Too many companies, he said, are staying silent. Goldberg explained if the full CLCPA mandates go through, propane marketers could lose their entire customer base. He said moderate Democrats in Albany are increasingly uneasy about affordability.

Nineteen upstate Democrats had recently urged Gov. Hochul to delay the all-electric mandate. Republican Senators Mark Walczyk and Tom O'Mara pressed the Hochul administration to "refocus on affordability, reliability and a diverse energy portfolio."

If the public starts calling their local propane companies asking questions, Armentano said, that's progress.

"That is a home run for our industry," she said. "It means that people are



Richard Goldberg

understanding, they're listening and they're also really seeing what is at stake."

A PAUSE THAT SHIFTS MOMENTUM — BUT NOT THE BATTLE

The Nov. 12 announcement doesn't end New York's electrification efforts, but it

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Paul Palmesano

does change the landscape, buying time for litigation, opening political debate heading into 2026 and forcing the state to defend the feasibility of its timelines. If Mulhern takes the case to the U.S. Supreme Court, the delay could put key aspects of the CLCPA on ice.

A little-known CLCPA provision allows New York to delay mandates if

the electric grid cannot support them — something industry leaders expect to become part of the public conversation.

New York is seeking to attract large energy users such as AI data centers. Anthropic, an AI development company, announced it plans to invest \$50 billion for campuses in New York and Texas.

AN INDUSTRY AT A CROSSROADS

Reflecting on the pause, Cummings said the fight is not just legal or political — it's personal.

"New York's energy story isn't done," he said. "Our industry has adapted for a hundred years. We'll adapt again, but energy transitions don't happen by decree. They happen by design."

Armentano said the pause should energize the industry rather than relax it.

"I'm proud to serve as NYPGA president during such a pivotal moment for our members, our communities and our state."

One key factor in the future of propane and carbon footprint reduction is even if New York state were to hit all of its aggressive climate goal numbers, countries in other parts of the world are still burning coal. No doubt, everyone needs to do their fair share, but the global picture is important to keep in mind, according to Palmesano.

With enforcement halted for now and court battles looming, Cummings says he's ready to return — at least for the moment — to the job he knows best: keeping homes and businesses warm in the Hudson Valley.

NYPGA's spring meeting is scheduled for March 24-25, 2026, at The Desmond in Albany, New York. 📍

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BEYOND THE ACQUISITION: CRAFTING A DEAL THAT PRESERVES WHAT YOU'VE BUILT

Crucial steps to take during the M&A process
to protect your company's core values

BY CHAD PENDILL

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At a certain stage in every successful company's development, a business owner faces the decision to sell. For some, this choice signifies the conclusion of an accomplished career, while for others it represents a tactical progression into another phase. Irrespective of individual motivations, transferring ownership has implications that reach beyond the transaction value. A successful business sale is not only defined by financial metrics but also by the preservation of the organization's culture and legacy. Owners should recognize that a company encompasses more than its financial statements. It reflects years — and many times, generations — of commitment, innovation and valuable relationships established with employees and the surrounding community.

In the contemporary business environment characterized by financial engineering and consolidation, companies are frequently regarded as assets for acquisition. Emphasis is

placed on factors such as synergies, market share and cost optimization, often at the expense of human considerations and organizational heritage. This transactional approach risks diminishing the distinctive culture, core values and community relationships that are integral to a company's identity.

Owners who overlook these aspects may inadvertently undervalue both their achievements and the contributions of their teams. Conversely, owners who actively safeguard their organization's legacy contribute to its enduring narrative, thereby offering sustained value to all stakeholders.

THE OWNER'S ROLE IN M&A

An essential aspect of preserving a company's legacy is for the owner to articulate the organization's history and outline the factors contributing to its success. Establishing a clear and coherent narrative not only reflects the owner's vision but

also presents potential buyers with an insightful perspective on the business's continued progress.

By thoroughly documenting the company's milestones, pivotal decisions and core values, the owner provides a comprehensive understanding of what has shaped the business over time. This transparency can build credibility and trust among prospective buyers, highlighting not just past achievements but also the foundational principles that drive ongoing innovation and resilience.

Moreover, sharing stories of overcoming challenges or adapting to market changes demonstrates the adaptability and strength of the company, reassuring buyers of its long-term sustainability. Owners might also include testimonials from clients, detailed accounts of successful projects and descriptions of unique cultural practices. All these elements together create a rich tapestry that sets the business apart, ensuring its legacy endures through future leadership.

Furthermore, commitment to preserving legacy should be a core discussion with prospective buyers. Owners are encouraged to seek out buyers that not only value the company as an asset, but also recognize its unique culture and historical significance. Expanding the pool of potential buyers increases the likelihood of finding a successor capable of upholding and advancing the established legacy.

However, even when selling a business, there are no guarantees on what a buyer does with the business after taking over. It is essential to convey the significance of these factors at an early stage, presenting them as integral components of the company's distinct value proposition. Additionally, identifying a buyer with a proven track record in successfully transitioning businesses and honoring post-sale commitments is crucial.

DUE DILIGENCE ON BUYERS

To further safeguard the legacy, it is essential to conduct a certain level of

due diligence on prospective buyers, seeking organizations with a proven track record of respecting and nurturing the businesses they acquire. Owners should look for successors that demonstrate integrity, transparency and a genuine commitment to continuity — not just in words, but in their past actions. Engaging in candid conversations about expectations and explicitly including legacy-preserving provisions within the sale agreement can also help ensure the company's culture and reputation are maintained post-transaction.

Ultimately, selecting a buyer that has a positive history in transitioning businesses and that consistently follows through on their promises after the transaction is complete can significantly increase the likelihood of a successful handover. By taking these steps, owners not only protect what they have built, but also provide reassurance to employees, customers and the broader community that the company's values and impact will endure under new stewardship.

Preserving a company's legacy indicates that its work is viewed as significant beyond financial results. This action communicates to employees, customers and the wider community that contributions are acknowledged and that there is an intention for the organization's positive influence to continue. For owners, transferring leadership thoughtfully provides a sense of conclusion. It recognizes that the efforts invested in developing the company were not solely for individual benefit, but also for establishing something intended to last.

In environments where innovation is often prioritized over continuity, deliberately maintaining legacy represents a considered approach to business stewardship.

THE FINAL FAREWELL

The finality of a business sale can be deeply emotional, akin to a parent watching a child leave home. The owner has poured their heart and soul into building something remarkable, a

testament to their vision and resilience. Yet, the feeling of apprehension about letting go can be eased by a thoughtful approach to succession. By planning early and making legacy a priority of the exit strategy, owners can transform what could be an ending into a meaningful continuation. They move from being the company's sole author to ensuring its best chapters are yet to be written, secured by a new steward that honors the past while building the future.

In the end, the feeling of apprehension about letting go can be eased by a thoughtful approach to succession. By planning early and making legacy a priority of the exit strategy, owners can transform what could be an ending into a meaningful continuation.

Engaging in open conversations with potential buyers and conducting thorough due diligence to find the buyers that genuinely appreciate and respect the company's culture can further ease the transition.

By approaching succession as an opportunity to curate and protect the company's legacy, owners move from being the company's sole author to ensuring its best chapters are yet to be written. They secure the future of what they have built by entrusting stewardship to a buyer that honors the past while building toward new achievements. In this way, the sale is not merely a conclusion, but a strategic and heartfelt transition — one that preserves the organization's identity and allows it to thrive in a new era. 🏠

Chad Pendill is the founder of Legacy Energy Consulting, which offers M&A services for propane marketers, as well as business valuation and strategic planning. With 35 years of experience in the propane industry, the company assists business owners with the sale and transition of their businesses. Learn more by visiting legacyenergyconsulting.com or calling 763-772-2834. Contact Pendill at chad@legacyenergyconsulting.com.



SMOOTH TRANSITIONS: HOW PROPANE COMPANIES PROTECT PEOPLE, CULTURE & CUSTOMERS AFTER AN ACQUISITION

Building trust in the acquisition process promotes partnership over takeover

BY CHRISTINA ARMENTANO



IMAGE COURTESY OF PARACO.

In the propane industry, acquisitions go far beyond financial transactions; they're opportunities to unite cultures and strengthen shared purpose. At Paraco, we believe acquisitions should feel more like partnerships. When done well, they can strengthen operations, expand service areas and create new opportunities for employees and customers. But without thoughtful integration, they risk eroding trust, morale and the very values that made the acquired company successful in the first place. Each of Paraco's acquisitions has taught us that the true measure of success isn't just operational efficiency, but how well you protect the people, culture and customer relationships that define a company's legacy.

What too often goes underrated in acquisitions is how to protect the most important assets of the business: the people, the culture and the customers. If we get the "what, how and why" of integration wrong, we risk losing ground even as we grow.

PRIORITIZING PEOPLE FIRST

At the core of any integration are the employees, including the drivers, service techs, dispatchers, area managers and support teams. These are the folks who keep tanks filled, trucks running and customers smiling. When change comes (and it will), our job as leaders is to protect their engagement and momentum.

The most immediate impact of an acquisition is felt by employees. Uncertainty about roles, leadership, expectations and company direction can create anxiety. That's why the first priority should always be clear, empathetic communication.

From the moment a transaction is announced, it's imperative to work hard to provide clarity: what will change, what will stay the same, what the timeline will be and what roles people will have.

Investment in onboarding programs that go beyond job descriptions is also a key tenet of a successful transition. New team members should be introduced

to your company's values, leadership style and long-term vision. Make it clear they're not just joining a company, but becoming part of a company that wants to understand the legacy of the business and build upon it.

PRESERVING CULTURE, NOT JUST PROCESSES

Every propane company has its own rhythm and its own way of serving customers, managing teams and solving problems. Rather than impose a one-size-fits-all approach, look for cultural synergies.

In one recent acquisition of Paraco's, the company had a strong tradition of community involvement. Instead of replacing their local initiatives with our own, we expanded them, offering additional resources and encouraging cross-team participation. The result? A stronger, more unified presence in the community and a deeper sense of purpose among employees.

We also recognize that culture lives in the small things, including how teams communicate, how decisions are made and how success is celebrated. By observing and honoring these nuances, you can build trust and avoid the friction that often accompanies change.

MAINTAINING CUSTOMER TRUST

Customers don't care about corporate strategy; they care about service. That's why integration plans should always keep a customer-first focus.

Before any public announcement, prepare your customer service teams with talking points, FAQs and escalation protocols. You want every representative to feel confident answering questions and addressing concerns.

Also consider the importance of prioritizing continuity. Make every effort to retain office staff, local drivers, service techs and account managers. These are the people customers know and trust, and their presence sends a powerful message: "We're still here for you."

In the weeks following an acquisition, proactively reach out to customers with

personalized communications. Explain what's changing, what's staying the same and how the transition will benefit them. Transparency builds confidence, and confidence builds loyalty.

TIPS FOR A SMOOTH TRANSITION

For propane companies considering an acquisition, here are a few guiding principles we've found invaluable as we transition a new organization into ours:

- *Start with empathy.* Understand the emotional landscape before making operational changes.
- *Honor legacy.* Celebrate the history and values of the acquired company; they're part of your new story.
- *Communicate early and often.* Silence breeds speculation, while clarity builds trust.
- *Invest in integration.* Don't just merge systems — merge cultures, relationships and expectations.
- *Stay customer-focused.* Every decision should enhance the customer experience, not disrupt it.

BUILDING A LEGACY OF THOUGHTFUL COMPANY GROWTH

At Paraco, we believe acquisitions should feel less like takeovers and more like partnerships. When handled with care, acquisitions can be transformative — not just for the bottom line, but for the people and communities the company serves. While a solid and successful acquisition track record is something to be proud of, even more important are the relationships built along the way. ■

Christina Armentano is Paraco's executive vice president and chief operating officer. Paraco has served the Northeast since 1968, supplying propane for residential, commercial, industrial and agricultural applications across the region. Family-owned and -operated for three generations, Paraco is committed to exceptional customer service, safety and innovation. Visit paracogas.com.



WHEN THE UNIMAGINABLE STRIKES: TRUE TALES OF EMERGENCY SUCCESSION IN PROPANE

When sudden loss hits a company, strong leadership & succession planning can mean the difference between survival & collapse

BY KENDALL RAWLS

It's mid-January. Drivers are working double shifts, and tanks are being filled around the clock. Then, the phone rings. It's the owner's wife — he didn't get up this morning.

Within hours, the phones illuminate with queries:

- Who can authorize deliveries?
- Who can get to the bank accounts?
- Who's signing payroll?
- Who oversees the business?

No one knows. The bookkeeper isn't authorized to sign checks. The general manager lacks the authority to make necessary strategic decisions. The leadership stands paralyzed because no one had ever told them what to do in a situation like this.

Does this sound dramatic? It's not. Similar stories occur often in the propane industry, exposing what was never planned for. In a business as hands-on and service-driven as propane, the effect is immediate. Customers panic, creditors call, employees lose confidence and families mourn as they navigate decisions they never expected.

This isn't a story of loss, but one about what you can control. When the unthinkable occurs, the distinction between a company that survives and one that crumbles is often a matter of proactive strategy and scenario planning.

THE DOMINO EFFECT: WHAT'S NEXT?

When an owner or key leader is suddenly gone, it's not just their responsibilities that falter. They are the center of the

wheel. Remove that hub, and everything attached to it begins to wobble:

- *Leadership continuity:* Who's calling the shots?
- *Team synergy:* How well does the team come together or fall apart?
- *Family governance:* Can the family act as one?
- *Strategic direction:* Was there a strategy or instincts in one person's mind?
- *Business performance:* Will the company be able to generate cash flow and maintain its reputation through uncertain times?

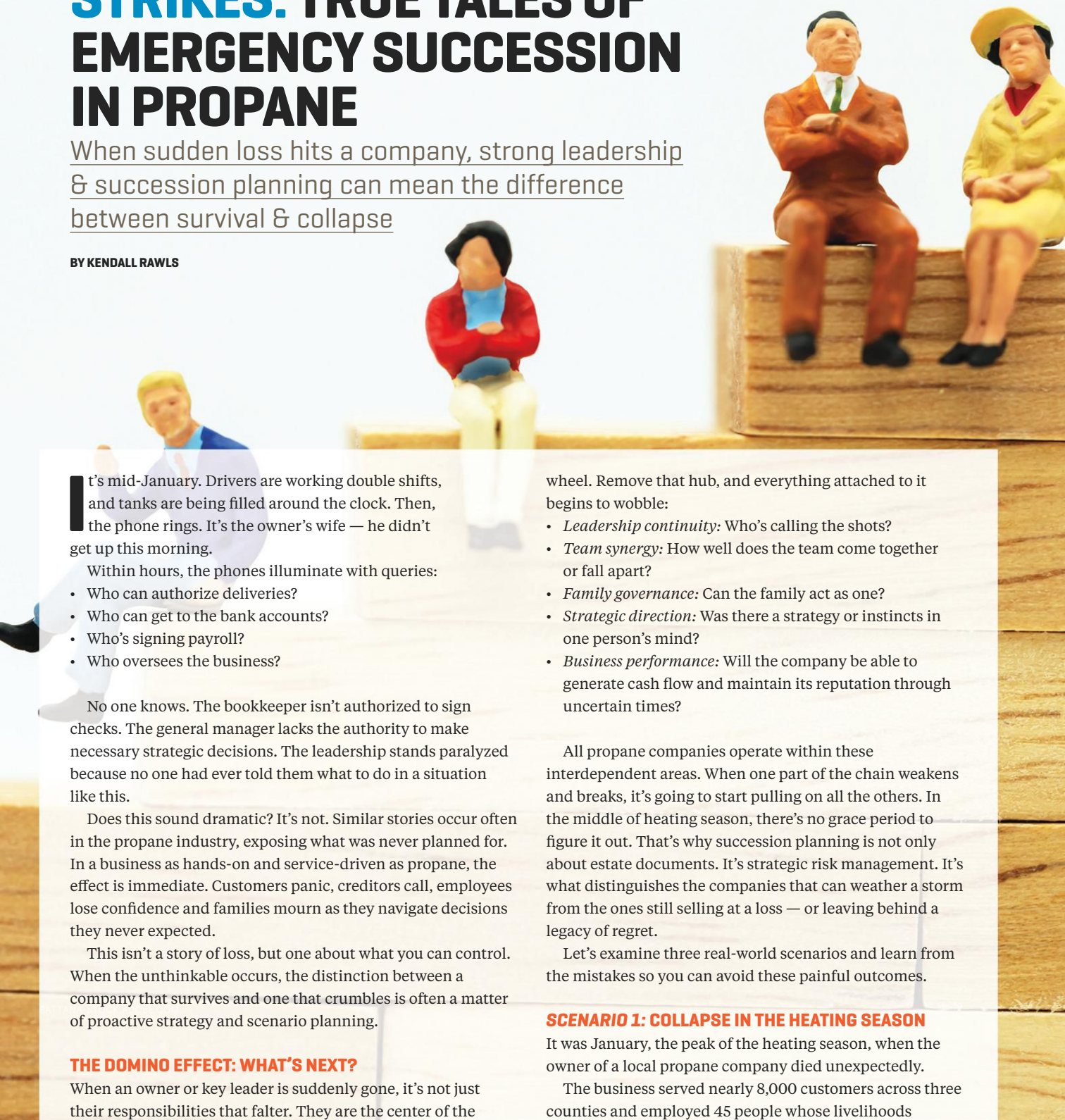
All propane companies operate within these interdependent areas. When one part of the chain weakens and breaks, it's going to start pulling on all the others. In the middle of heating season, there's no grace period to figure it out. That's why succession planning is not only about estate documents. It's strategic risk management. It's what distinguishes the companies that can weather a storm from the ones still selling at a loss — or leaving behind a legacy of regret.

Let's examine three real-world scenarios and learn from the mistakes so you can avoid these painful outcomes.

SCENARIO 1: COLLAPSE IN THE HEATING SEASON

It was January, the peak of the heating season, when the owner of a local propane company died unexpectedly.

The business served nearly 8,000 customers across three counties and employed 45 people whose livelihoods



depended on the owner's leadership and the company's stability. For decades, the owner's accountant and lawyer had assured him everything was in order. The estate plan was signed, insurance was funded and the trust was up to date. What no one knew was that the papers had protected the family's wealth but not the company's ability to operate on Thursday morning.

There was no operating agreement, no emergency signatories and no leadership bridge.

After the owner passed away, the bank froze all the accounts because he was the only authorized signer. Vendors stopped shipping. Payroll halted. And while the certified public accountant (CPA) and attorney were quick to assist, neither had the authority or skills needed to operate the business or quiet customer fears.

The owner's wife, still reeling from the news, suddenly found herself signing off on a slew of purchases and explaining to staff why checks weren't being honored. The general manager attempted to rally the troops, but with no authority or fallback plan in place, what had been a thriving business lost clients, cash flow and credibility within weeks.

By February, routes were disrupted, accounts were lost and competitors were circling because planning stopped where the tax strategy ended.

WHAT THIS BUSINESS DIDN'T DO, BUT YOU STILL CAN

- *Establish strong financial and legal continuity:*
 - Include cosignatories to all accounts and signing authorities.
 - Draft an operating agreement specifying who can make decisions in an emergency.
 - Keep important papers up to date and within reach.
- *Design a clear pathway for leadership continuity:*
 - Determine who leads in the first 30 days, six months and beyond.
 - Identify and develop interim operators and long-term successors now.

- *Align your advisory team for the big picture:*
 - Ensure your CPA, attorney and succession planner collaborate.
 - Estate and tax planning protect assets, but a succession planner brings it all together — aligning business management, family dynamics, leadership development and strategic direction so the company performs through transition, not just survives it.
- *Prepare family and key leaders:*
 - Bring transparency to structure, finances and decision-making to reduce confusion, prevent conflict and protect relationships during transition.
- *Review and update annually:*
 - Update with significant changes, such as growth, leadership transitions or new regulations.
 - Conduct scenario-planning sessions that anticipate emerging issues before they reach the crisis stage.

SCENARIO 2: THE FAMILY FEUD FALLOUT

A second-generation propane company was thriving with good margins and a loyal customer base. The founder, who was 79, had semiretired and left both children to run the business.

One sibling was responsible for operations, overseeing 20 drivers and daily logistics. The other managed sales and administration. Each thought they were the key driver to their success.

For years, simmering tension played out as competing leadership styles and a turf battle frustrated top managers caught in the middle. The founder saw the conflict but avoided it, hoping time and success would smooth things over. They didn't.

When the founder passed away, the siblings became co-owners; a governance structure was set to determine authority, profit distribution or dispute resolution. Every disagreement turned personal.

The operations sibling often said, "I'm the one who's keeping this place running." The other countered, "You

may do deliveries, but I'm the one who's keeping customers and cash flow."

The service manager walked out after some heated exchanges. Consequently, one of the lead drivers followed him to another employer. Losing them hit hard; they knew the customers and kept things moving. When they departed, everything felt difficult. Deliveries were delayed, calls fell through the cracks and customers began walking away.

At home, it was no better. The siblings' mom attempted to keep the peace, but family dinners were filled with silence. The siblings hardly spoke.

Two years later, the company that had been a local success story was on the verge of collapse. Sales were sinking, crucial people had departed and legal threats hung in the air. So, the siblings made a final decision together: sell before it all collapsed.

The sale to a regional consolidator wasn't supposed to happen; it was a matter of survival.

HOW TO HOLD A FAMILY'S LEADERSHIP TOGETHER

If you already sense there's resentment in the family or a feeling — "I don't know if they're all going to work well when we're gone" — don't leave it up to them. There is too much risk for your business, your employees and your family relationships. Address the issue now while you're able to steer the process.

- *Establish governance early:*
 - Formalize decision-making, voting rights and dispute resolution.
 - Governance allows siblings to establish expectations and transform resentment into accountability and mutual respect.
- *Clarify roles, key responsibilities and accountability:*
 - Define who's leading, who's supporting and how decisions are made. Clear roles prevent overlap, confusion and resentment while building trust and teamwork among family members.
- *Protect and empower key leaders:*
 - Family members outside the family

tree are often the glue that holds the business together — but only if they feel supported.

- Define authority and provide leadership training for family and nonfamily managers.
- *Create a communication forum:*
 - Organize structured meetings to talk about priorities and challenges before conflict takes hold.
 - Create a supportive environment where siblings can learn to be partners, not competitors.
 - Utilize a third party (someone neutral) to manage productive and focused discussions.
- *Engage in strategic planning:*
 - Strategic planning serves as a platform through which siblings can come together around long-term vision and goals.
 - With an outside facilitator, they can reach mutual decisions rather than depend on a “dad” to take sides.

SCENARIO 3: THE MARKET 'NO ONE PLANNED FOR'

For over 60 years, a family-owned propane company was the go-to provider in its region. The current president, a third-generation owner in her mid-50s, had worked her way up through the business. Ten years earlier, when she stepped into a leadership role, she helped double the company's size and modernize its systems.

But despite her success, significant decisions were still made by her father, who continued to work as chairman. There was a strong, visionary management team, but major strategic decisions had to wait until the chairman returned from vacation or hobbies.

The president lobbied to adapt to new carbon rules and emerging technology trends. Her managers provided data and ideas, but approval from her father was required for every major investment. His semiretired life and skepticism of modern technology frequently delayed progress.

Suddenly, the president's father had a stroke. While he did bounce back, he was forced to focus on his recovery, which

distanced him from the business for nine months. While he was recovering, his daughter discovered how little real power she had. Everything from contracts to supplier agreements and even financing was subject to dual approval. Managers felt the strain of unclear direction and the inability to address critical strategic issues.

Frustration grew. Some top managers, unsure how things would play out, decided to leave, taking good employees and long-time customers with them. The loss of stability quickly affected performance, service and morale.

The president was paralyzed — expected to lead but not given the power to act. Her relationship with her father became strained as she pushed for control while he resisted letting go.

When her father returned, the damage was evident. Key accounts had left, morale was low and momentum had halted. They weren't brought down by regulation or competition but by uncertain authority and lack of planning for the transfer of control.

BUILDING DEPTH OF LEADERSHIP BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE

- *Create a culture of shared leadership:*
 - Involve managers in strategic planning and key decisions.
 - Encourage collaboration and cross-department problem-solving.
 - Shared leadership strengthens adaptability and performance under pressure.
- *Develop and test leadership readiness:*
 - Invest in development and coaching for current and emerging leaders.
 - Delegate real responsibility and step back to see how the team performs without you.
 - Testing readiness builds confidence and exposes gaps before a crisis.
- *Plan for generational transitions early:*
 - Outline the timing and structure for transferring leadership and decision-making.
 - Include all active family members so expectations are clear.
 - Early planning prevents confusion and resentment.

- *Clarify authority and decision-making:*
 - Define who has authority for strategic, financial and operational decisions now and in the future.
 - Document approvals so decisions don't depend on one or two people.
 - Clear authority keeps the business moving when leadership shifts.
- *Formalize a leadership succession plan:*
 - Work with a succession planning advisor to align ownership, management and governance.
 - Define key roles, responsibilities and backup authority for critical positions.
 - A formal plan connects people, authority and systems for smooth transitions.

THE PLANNING ADVANTAGE: THE WHAT-IF FACTOR

Succession planning isn't about predicting everything that can go wrong. It's about finding what you cannot afford to be wrong about.

- Identify your critical dependencies — what would happen if they were absent, and what would idle operations look like tomorrow?
- Map the “what-ifs” — sickness, death, regulation or even a key employee walking out.
- Test your reply — who comes in, and what's the chain of communication?

When owners complete this exercise, fear becomes a form of control. They identify areas they have never seen before, bolstering leadership and building confidence that their teams can perform under pressure. 📌

Kendall Rawls is the director of development with The Rawls Group — Business Succession Planners. She understands the challenges that impact the success of a family-owned business as a second-generation family member employee of The Rawls Group. For more information, visit rawlsgroup.com, call 407-578-4455 or email info@rawlsgroup.com.





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THE USUAL SUSPECTS: THE DREAM TEAM FOR A PRIVATE EQUITY BUYER

5 key leadership players you need
in place to demonstrate your
preparedness to potential investors

BY FORD DUBOSE

When private equity (PE) firms look to invest in the propane industry, they're not just buying bobtails, tanks or financial performance; they're investing in people, playbooks and potential. While EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization) and growth remain critical, what increasingly determines value and deal success is the caliber of the leadership team. The companies that command premium valuations have one thing in common: They've already assembled "the usual suspects," a well-rounded management team ready to partner with new investors and scale.

I. FINANCIAL FUNDAMENTALS STILL MATTER

There's no getting around the numbers. Private equity buyers still scrutinize key metrics such as EBITDA, revenue growth, customer concentration and margin stability. Clean financials compliant with generally accepted accounting principles, as well as transparent reporting, are the baseline for credibility. In propane, accurate fuel cost accounting, seasonal cash flow planning, historical and future capital expenditures (CAPEX), and margin management are especially vital.

But here's the catch: Those fundamentals alone won't close the deal.

A propane company with perfect books but a weak or overextended leadership structure will struggle to attract quality buyers that don't have an existing management team in place in their market. The best-performing PE firms have learned that sustainable growth comes not from spreadsheets, but from strong teams that can execute their vision in the real world.

II. THE DREAM TEAM: KEY ROLES THAT SIGNAL 'INVESTMENT-READY'

Private equity buyers have a pattern: They look for specific roles and capabilities that reduce risk, ensure continuity and accelerate growth post-close. The following are the "usual suspects" every propane business should have in place.

1. The CEO or President With Vision & Delegation Skills

For a PE buyer, the ideal CEO is a leader, not a bottleneck. They set direction but don't need to control every decision. In the propane space, this might mean an owner-operator who's successfully transitioned from daily route management to strategic planning, or someone open to stepping into a chairman role as the company scales under new ownership.

PE firms value leaders who can either grow with the company or gracefully transition, ensuring continuity without ego. A CEO with a mindset that's collaborative, transparent and focused on the future can be the difference between a smooth integration and a rough one.

2. The CFO or Financial Controller Who Thinks Strategically

Private equity diligence runs deep, and propane companies without a strong financial partner often falter under the microscope. A sophisticated chief financial officer (CFO), or controller in smaller firms, can provide clarity and confidence in every discussion.

The ideal financial leader understands cash flow, margins by customer class, and delivery efficiency, and can model

how CAPEX or acquisitions might impact future returns. They're fluent in private equity language, monthly reporting cadence, adjusted EBITDA and working capital management.

Experience with acquisitions or integrations is a significant plus. PE buyers want to know this person can scale financial operations as the business grows from regional to multistate.

3. The COO or Operations Lead With Process Discipline

The best propane operators have already professionalized their processes before a deal ever begins. They've implemented modern systems, enterprise resource planning platforms, key performance indicator (KPI) dashboards and safety protocols that give visibility into delivery metrics, asset utilization and workforce performance.

An effective chief operations officer (COO) doesn't just keep the trucks moving; they drive continuous improvement. They understand that operational efficiency directly translates to margin enhancement, something PE buyers appreciate. When they see evidence of route optimization, tank monitoring technology and customer retention systems already in play, they see scalability and reduced risk.

4. Sales & Marketing Leadership With a Repeatable Playbook

In many propane companies, growth has historically come from word-of-mouth or opportunistic acquisitions. But private equity firms want to see evidence of a repeatable, data-driven sales process.

A strong sales and marketing leader isn't just a "rainmaker"; they're a builder. They've created a structured sales funnel, implemented customer relationship management systems, and can measure conversion rates and customer lifetime value. They understand how to segment their customers into residential, agricultural, commercial and autogas — and tailor campaigns accordingly.

In short, they bring science to what has long been treated as art, and in doing

so, they demonstrate that growth is sustainable, not accidental.

5. HR or People Leadership: Building the Culture That Stays

In propane distribution, people are the backbone of the business. Drivers, service techs, dispatchers and customer service representatives shape the customer experience daily. Yet, many propane firms overlook the importance of structured HR leadership.

Even a fractional HR leader can make a huge difference. They ensure compliance, improve retention and build succession plans — key elements that PE firms value. Nothing raises red flags faster than a business dependent on one or two "irreplaceable" people with no backup.

Private equity investors want to see evidence that the company can retain its workforce post-acquisition. Companies that already offer incentive programs, training pathways and cultural stability signal lower turnover risk and higher operational resilience.

III. MANAGEMENT QUALITIES PE BUYERS PRIORITIZE

Beyond roles, private equity buyers assess the chemistry of a team. They ask: Can these people take direction? Can they partner effectively? Will they drive results after the deal?

Coachability & Partnership Orientation

PE buyers prefer management teams that are open to collaboration. They want leaders who welcome strategic guidance and align quickly around new objectives. Defensive or insular leadership styles are immediate red flags.

Accountability & Transparency

Data-driven decision-making and open communication are nonnegotiable. PE firms value leaders who know their numbers and aren't afraid to discuss challenges. Regular reporting discipline, such as weekly KPIs or monthly financial reviews, demonstrates that the company operates on facts, not feelings.

Incentive Alignment

Many successful propane sellers already tie compensation to company performance. When key leaders participate in profit-sharing or equity programs, they're aligned with investor outcomes. This signals maturity and fosters trust with potential buyers.

IV. RED FLAGS: WHEN THE PEOPLE PUZZLE ISN'T COMPLETE

PE buyers are adept at spotting weak points. Among the biggest deal-killers in propane transactions are:

- Overreliance on a single founder or "key man"
- No second tier of leadership
- Outdated or homegrown systems

V. THE PEOPLE-DRIVEN PLAYBOOK FOR GROWTH

Private equity often doesn't want to replace management; they tend to prefer to invest in them. A solid leadership

team can accelerate post-acquisition integration, enable bolt-on acquisitions and drive operational improvements faster than any consultant ever could.

In the propane space, where logistics, safety and customer service intersect daily, having leaders who can adapt and communicate across functions is invaluable.

VI. BUILDING THE BENCH BEFORE THE EXIT

For propane owners considering an eventual sale, the message is clear: Build your bench early. The time to strengthen leadership isn't six months before listing the company; it's years in advance.

Ask yourself: If I were a PE buyer, would I invest in this team?

Cultivate leaders who can scale, document your processes and empower others to lead. Companies that demonstrate strong human capital, not just financial capital, consistently

achieve higher valuations and smoother transitions.

In today's mergers and acquisitions (M&A) landscape, especially within the propane industry, private equity buyers are looking for more than profitable operations; they're searching for the dream team. The "usual suspects" are seasoned professionals who bring structure, accountability and scalability to a business poised for growth.

For sellers, assembling that team isn't just a matter of readiness; it's a matter of value creation. The right people in the right seats don't just keep the business running — they make it irresistible. ▀

Ford DuBose is an associate at the M&A advisory firm Cetane Associates. Contact him at fdubose@cetane.com. Visit cetane.com.



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PALMER GAS & OIL INTRODUCES RENEWABLE PROPANE TO CUSTOMERS

The company marked National Propane Day by opening a new storage facility & introducing renewable propane to southern New Hampshire

BY PETER IACOBUCCI

IMAGES COURTESY OF PALMER GAS & OIL



When Palmer Gas & Oil (PGO) began planning a ribbon cutting for its latest propane storage facility, the obvious date of the event could only be National Propane Day, or Oct. 7. Like any good propane marketer, PGO celebrates the day dedicated to recognizing the incredible value propane brings to homes, farms and businesses across its service area.

National Propane Day also provides the chance to thank and appreciate the people — the technicians, drivers, engineers, safety experts and countless others — who keep propane safe, available and accessible every single day. It also opens awareness and educates the community on the vast benefits of propane.

Of course, that date is especially

significant for PGO, as PGO's own Charlie Ermer, fourth-generation marketer, was one of the original champions of National Propane Day.

In addition to announcing the opening of its new propane storage facility, PGO chose to start the renewable propane conversation in its service area by having a load of renewable propane delivered during its ribbon-cutting event — the first company in southern New Hampshire to do so.

This milestone stands as a testament to the importance of renewable propane as the industry takes steps toward a more robust renewable market.

Through PGO's experiences with renewable propane in this setting, propane marketers can gain insights on introducing the concept to customers

and keeping an eye on fluctuations in price and demand.

STARTING THE RENEWABLE PROPANE CONVERSATION

Using National Propane Day as a springboard, PGO wanted to make a statement to its customers and community that highlighted its investment in renewable propane, a fuel that offers the reliability of traditional propane with a dramatically reduced carbon footprint.

This new facility in New Hampshire, consisting of four 45,000-gallon tanks, coupled with the fact that renewable propane does not require any additional equipment to use, transport or store, illustrates PGO's — and the propane industry's — commitment to start

making renewable propane more available to communities across its service area.

INTRODUCING THE CONCEPT

The goal of this initial delivery was to slowly start introducing PGO's customer base to renewable propane. PGO's customers range from modern new construction residences in the middle of a densely populated city, to historic homes and farms nestled at the end of dirt roads, as well as many commercial businesses such as restaurants, schools and churches.

Though New Englanders are well-versed in the use of propane to heat their homes and fuel their generators, renewable propane is neither widely known nor generally discussed. Propane is viewed as a cleaner alternative to other fossil fuels but isn't necessarily viewed as "green."

In starting the conversation, it was important to highlight the benefits of renewable propane: It offers the same cost efficiency, energy efficiency and resiliency benefits of propane but at significantly reduced carbon emissions, making it an ultra-low carbon option. Because it has the same molecular structure, efficiency and output as conventional propane, renewable propane can be used in any propane appliance without modification.

And finally, because renewable propane is domestically produced, it supports American jobs by reducing reliance on foreign energy.

Introducing renewable propane allowed PGO to start educating its customers in the hopes of opening a new market as renewable propane becomes more well-known.

POISED TO MEET DEMAND — WHEN DEMAND HAPPENS

Though PGO has the storage, trucks and people-power to support a move to renewable propane, that does not necessarily mean the company is ready to immediately roll it out across all service areas. PGO plans to take a wait-and-see



strategy as relates to a renewable propane roll out — a strategy that may feel familiar to other marketers in the U.S. as the renewable propane market tests its strength.

Due to the higher production costs of manufacturing renewable propane, the cost per gallon is currently more than conventional propane. With customers already extremely cost-focused, forcing a higher-priced product on all of its customers — who may or may not be environmentally conscious — could prove to be damaging to the current customer base.

And while segregating a truck and a storage tank for renewable propane for those customers for whom the environmental benefits offset the higher costs, it is not a cost-effective strategy for a marketer to drive 60 miles to deliver to one or two houses by request.

Of course, as with anything, as demand grows, prices will drop. Likewise, with the current research taking place and improvements in manufacturing processes, costs are also expected to decrease.

PGO's strategy is to continue to bring the concept (and reality) of renewable propane to the forefront by featuring it in its newsletters, emails, on its website and by providing internal training to its own employees so they can contribute to the conversation that was started.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Renewable propane is not a buzzword. It is a bridge to a low-carbon future — produced from sustainable sources like plant oils, animal fats and even recycled waste. It is already being used to reduce emissions in transportation, agriculture and residential heating. Thanks to its newest facility, PGO is starting the conversation within its service area.

As an industry, it is time we all celebrate real, measurable progress toward energy independence, environmental responsibility and economic opportunity. PGO is proud to be part of an industry that is evolving, proud to be contributing to a cleaner energy mix and proud to open a facility that will fuel innovation for decades to come.

PGO challenges all U.S. marketers to start having conversations with their own customers. Let us all start talking openly and often about renewable propane. ■

Peter Iacobucci is the general manager of Palmer Gas & Oil and is currently on the National Propane Gas Association board of directors as the Maine state director. Visit palmergas.com.



USER GROUPS — KEY TO A SUCCESSFUL TECH STRATEGY

Experience & feedback from real people are essential to product development

BY REGINA BALISTRERI



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Everyone wants to get the most out of their investments, and a technology investment is no exception. It's a strategic decision that requires valuable resources to execute, including people, time and money. While a software implementation results in greater efficiency and operational improvements, there is an important way to maximize those benefits, and that's through participation in a user group.

WHAT IS A USER GROUP?

A user group is a community of people who use the same product or service and come together to share knowledge, experience, feedback and ideas to improve their use of the product, the product itself and the company that develops it. Users connect through in-person and virtual meetings, forums, email groups and direct peer-to-peer communication. The group can be further organized into functional areas to better serve users with similar jobs. And, of course, a key benefit of

membership is having direct access to the technology provider to share feedback and participate in product design opportunities.

THE RIGHT TIME TO JOIN

At first glance, a user group might seem like a nice-to-have — something you'll consider joining as soon as you get up to speed on the product or have some extra time on your hands. But there are clear benefits to making your membership in a user group a priority from the moment you sign a contract with your technology provider.

"You don't know what you don't know, and I think that's especially true with software," shared Justin Bolus, wholesale fuel director of Bumgarner Oil and vice president of ADD Systems' user group. "When you're receiving training, you don't know exactly what you're going to use or what you need. You're just trying to get up and running. So, when you have a sounding board of other users who are eager to help you run a better business, it

really is a thing of great value."

A user group at its core is a source of support, but it can be even more. There is a synergy created through a user group that helps members and their companies achieve more than they could alone.

EDUCATION & SKILL DEVELOPMENT

One of the top reasons to join a user group is to learn more about the product. While every implementation comes with training, the process can feel overwhelming. The most necessary information is retained, but there is always much more to be learned. User groups are ideal sources for filling in the gaps and deepening product knowledge through regular meetings, forums, and additional training and educational opportunities.

"I think it's great to talk to people at all different levels — people who are just starting out and people who have been using the software for 20-30 years," shared Melissa Spahr, senior business analyst at Dead River Company and the

Once a user group gets started, it sprouts wings. It quickly becomes apparent that it is an invaluable resource to maximize your investment in technology, whether that be growing your software knowledge, improving the efficiency of your processes, influencing product development or focusing on personal development to make you a better team member. The possibilities are endless.

Service/Pegasus Committee chair for Add Systems' user group. "You learn something new every time. You get new ideas to better your company, better yourself or help others."

BEST PRACTICES GATHERING

Invariably, there are many ways to get something done, but knowing whether you are using the most efficient method is challenging — this is where a user group comes in. Sharing real-world challenges and complexities leads other members to share their processes, often introducing some members to completely new ideas they would not have thought of on their own.

"I think all of us are in a little bit of a silo within our role, within our company, within our region, so it helps to hear from people from different contexts, hearing how they pursue or solve challenges and how they do things," shared Zach Swartley, director of technology at Penn Valley Gas and chair of the Business Intelligence and Reporting Committee for ADD Systems' group. "The best practices other companies follow really help inform your decision-making."

NETWORK-BUILDING & PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Being part of a user group gives you ready access to a network of your peers, as well as your technology provider. You become part of a community of people you can seek out for answers to everyday questions and unique challenges. And user groups provide multiple

opportunities for members to meet their own professional goals, from becoming a system expert to honing leadership skills and seeking support while transitioning to a different functional area. Connecting with industry peers builds a strong network full of opportunities for personal growth.

"Anytime an opportunity to lead something arises, like taking on a chair position in a user group, it's always a great way to get yourself a little uncomfortable, but grow from it," shared Megan Carr, director of business logistics at Paraco Gas and president of ADD Systems' user group. "The group becomes more than just your industry colleagues. It becomes a network of friendships and support. So, it's not intimidating to join; there's a lot of support and encouragement that goes along with it."

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT INFLUENCE

User groups are an extremely valued source of feedback and product development direction for technology providers. Members have a direct line to product engineers to share their enhancement ideas and priorities, take part in design meetings, as well as gain early access to innovative new products. Members have a tangible opportunity to shape the future of software development and really tailor it to their needs.

"On a user group, you work very closely with your technology vendor," Spahr shared. "And when they work on enhancements, they reach out to you so that you can help create that solution. I

think ... probably the best thing for me is being part of the solution — being able to create it for not only my company but for others as well."

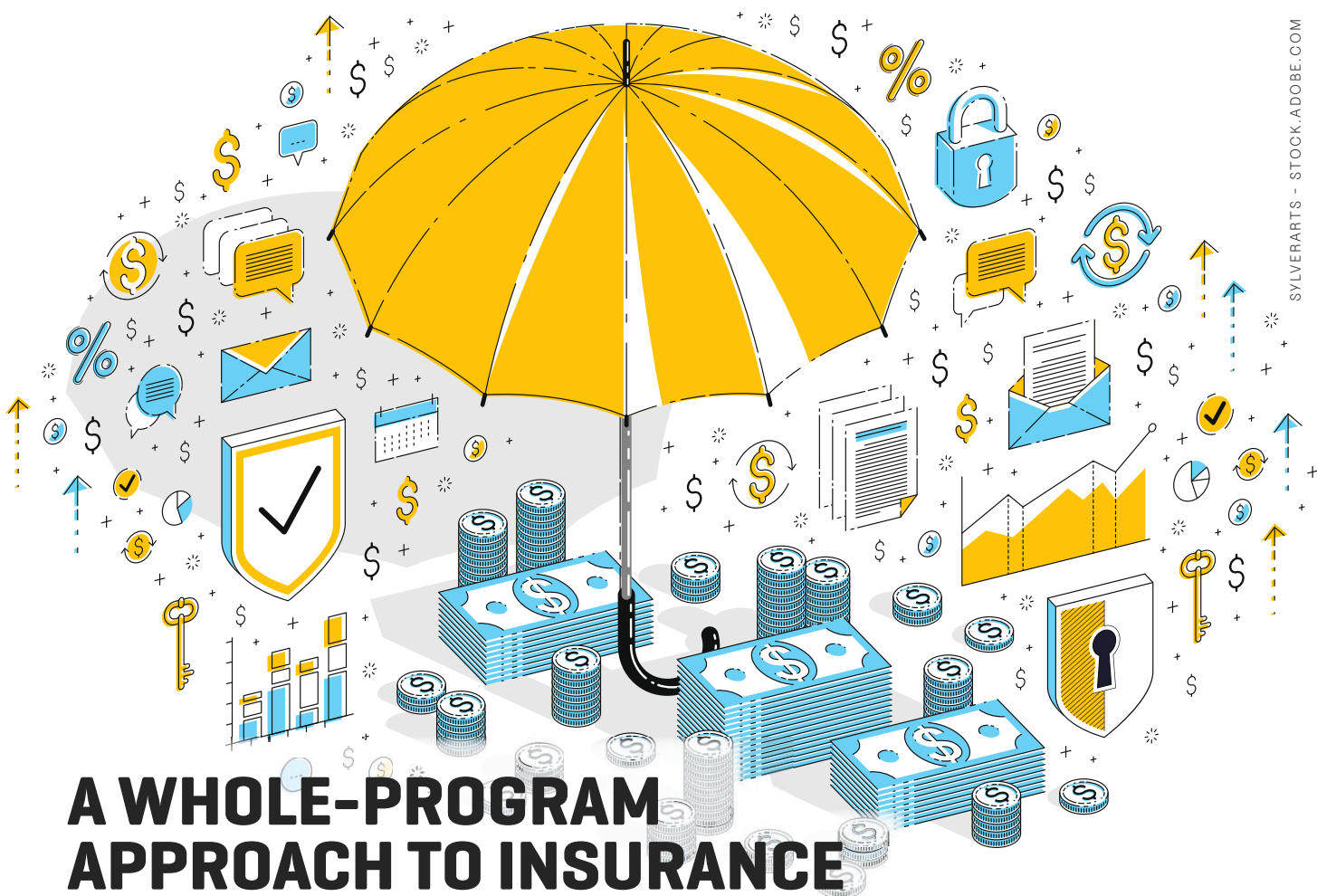
THE BENEFITS KEEP COMING!

Once a user group gets started, it sprouts wings. It quickly becomes apparent that it is an invaluable resource to maximize your investment in technology, whether that be growing your software knowledge, improving the efficiency of your processes, influencing product development or focusing on personal development to make you a better team member. The possibilities are endless.

"What I find funny now is that other people in leadership roles at my company come to me and say, 'Hey, can you ask that user group?' or 'Do you know anybody who might be able to do that?'" Carr shared. "So, people know about the power of the knowledge within [the] group, and they say, 'Maybe on the user group, you could ask some people, some of your friends.' So, it gets legs, and it becomes a very useful and powerful network." ■

Regina Balistreri is the director of marketing for ADD Systems, a software provider for the propane industry. Balistreri has also been an ADD sales representative and an implementation specialist. With 14-plus years in the industry, she is passionate about operational efficiency. Contact her at balistreri@addsys.com or visit addsys.com for more information.





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A WHOLE-PROGRAM APPROACH TO INSURANCE PROTECTS PROPANE MARKETERS EFFECTIVELY

Balancing single lines of umbrella coverage with an eye for the 'big picture' ensures a rightsized insurance fit

BY CHRISTINE SAWYER

Editor's Note: This piece reflects underwriting guidance and common industry practices. It's written to inform propane marketers, not to sell a specific product. Where terminology or availability varies by carrier or jurisdiction, confirm specifics with your broker or underwriting partner.

Propane marketers operate in a risk environment that is broader and more connected than it was a few years ago. Growth changes route density and fleet composition, subcontractors and acquisitions introduce additional

third-party exposure, and expectations around environmental stewardship and documentation have tightened.

Treating coverage as isolated line items often misses cross-dependencies that matter at claim time. A more reliable approach is to design a single, coherent program that mirrors how your business actually runs, then decide where limits belong and how the layers should interact. That framing keeps the discussion practical and complete:

auto and general liability, property and time-element, environmental, employee-related coverages, cyber and — yes — an umbrella/excess layer that manages severity across liability lines without becoming the headline.

WHAT'S CHANGING — & WHY IT MATTERS FOR LIMITS

Several operational shifts are reshaping coverage decisions. Larger delivery networks and subcontractor use expand third-party exposure and complicate risk transfer. Mergers and acquisitions activity and rapid scaling can bring inherited procedures and uneven training that are easy to miss without deliberate review. Meanwhile, higher claim costs — including the everyday matters that still absorb time and

money — are part of the reality carriers and insureds navigate together. Public and environmental accountability is tighter, raising the stakes on how storage, loading, delivery and cleanup are documented and managed. None of this argues for buying every coverage in sight; it argues for aligning terms and limits to how your operation actually functions — and acknowledging that the next loss that stresses your program may not look like the last one that did.

A PROGRAM, NOT A CHECKLIST

Most propane marketers anchor protection around auto liability, general liability and property/time-element. From there, additional lines round out the picture based on operational profile: auto physical damage (with attention to hail and flood territories), environmental protection (for example, liquid fuel contamination and pollutant cleanup/removal), inland marine and property in transit, and management or crime-related coverages as operations digitize and scale. Cyber has become more relevant as routing, billing and customer communications rely on software.

In many portfolios, an umbrella or excess layer sits above the liability lines to manage severity and help satisfy contractual limit obligations without constantly restructuring primary policies. The point isn't to insist on a single list that fits every operator; it's to underscore that each decision affects the others. An exclusion or sublimit in one place can undercut limit adequacy elsewhere — and most umbrellas follow the underlying liability forms rather than creating new coverage on their own, something to confirm explicitly when you review terms.

It's equally important to be clear about what sits where: Property and business interruption form a separate tower and are not “topped” by the liability umbrella, which emphasizes the importance of determining sufficient limits to reduce the risk of a potential co-insurance penalty. Thinking in layers — what responds first, what exhausts next and

where severity realistically lands — keeps expectations grounded and stakeholder conversations concrete.

EVALUATING FIT, NOT JUST PRICE

A practical review starts with exposure mapping. Fleet composition, delivery geographies and weather patterns — and the mix of residential, commercial, industrial and agricultural customers — shape both frequency and severity potential. Those inputs, together with loss history, should inform not only primary terms but also how you think about additional capacity: where a claim is most likely to pierce the primary and how much headroom makes sense for your profile. Consider this the “credibility test” for limits: matching dollars to realistic scenarios rather than to generic benchmarks.

Contracts deserve equal attention. Many commercial/industrial accounts and public entities specify elevated limits, additional-insured status, or primary and noncontributory wording. Meeting those obligations consistently across auto and general liability (GL) is often where an umbrella proves its value — allowing a marketer to satisfy varied counterparty requirements without re-engineering primary policies case by case. Requirements differ by contract, so verify limit clauses and endorsement language before assuming your current structure satisfies them.

Security and operational controls round out the evaluation. For fleets handling hazardous materials, maintaining and training to a coherent security plan helps set expectations for personnel, access management and in-transit procedures. The goal here isn't to cite a regulation; it's to reinforce that insurers and courts look for consistent, documented controls that match the exposure. If your team uses a formal plan, ensure training records and periodic audits are current and accessible.

Finally, compare coverage forms, not just prices. Two GL policies may treat failure to supply, misdelivery of liquid products or pollution-adjacent

allegations differently. Because umbrellas generally follow form, misunderstandings at the primary level tend to carry straight up the tower. Ask for side-by-side clarity on definitions, exclusions and conditions that are relevant to delivery, storage and service work. It also helps to work with partners fluent in propane operations and forms, so comparisons reflect real exposures rather than generic templates.

CONSIDERING LIMITS IN CONTEXT

The most durable programs are designed from how the business actually operates — not from any single line of coverage. In practice, the conversation starts with where severity is most credible for your profile — delivery operations, service work or premises — and how documentation, training and vendor/customer contracts shape that exposure over time. From there, the question becomes how best to balance primary terms with additional capacity so the program absorbs volatility without relying on one policy to do all the work.

Within that broader design, umbrella or excess limits are one lever among several. The same operational disciplines that strengthen primary liability — driver qualification, routine service documentation and clear customer communications — also make any added capacity more meaningful. Where contracts require higher limits, umbrella can be a straightforward way to meet obligations consistently across accounts; where they don't, it remains part of a balanced approach to severity alongside form wording, deductibles and risk-control practices.

Two framing notes keep expectations clear. First, terminology and scope vary by insurer. Many policies function on a following-form basis and are not intended to repair exclusions in the primary lines — confirm explicitly during renewal reviews. Second, liability capacity sits over liability; property and time-element protections are a separate tower with their own decisions about limits and sublimits.

INTEGRATING COVERAGE WITH OPERATING DISCIPLINE

Insurance responds best when it's paired with visible, consistent controls. The details vary by company, but the throughline is the same: What's practiced and documented day to day often determines how a claim unfolds months or years later. Maintain a written employee safety handbook and a driver safety policy, and keep preventive maintenance on a predictable cadence. On premises, straightforward measures — fencing and bollards around vulnerable assets, clear signage, accessible emergency shut-offs, video coverage with central alarms and fire extinguishers — help reduce both frequency and severity.

Fleet discipline should be routine rather than episodic. Verify motor vehicle records on a schedule, apply reasonable drug and alcohol testing protocols, use telematics or GPS for route and behavior

insight, and document pre- and post-trip inspections. Recognize safe driving and remember that reinforcement matters. On the service side, automate capture of pressure and leak tests, keep delivery details complete and searchable, and provide customers with simple, written duty-to-warn and safety information. None of these practices replace limits; they make the entire structure — primary terms and any added capacity — more likely to perform as intended, and they support stability at renewal.

BRINGING IT TOGETHER

As renewal approaches — or when material changes hit midterm — pull the conversation back to the whole program. What changed in fleet size, territories or customer mix? Which contracts now specify higher limits or different additional-insured language? Do your forms address propane-specific allegations the way you think they do?

If a large, credible loss occurred today, which line would respond first, and what — if anything — would push the claim beyond the primary?

Framed in that way, the capacity decision — whether to add, reduce or hold — becomes a practical limit-management choice in service of the broader structure, not a late-stage add-on. The outcome is a program that protects continuity when things go wrong — and supports everyday confidence when they don't. ■

Christine Sawyer is an underwriting professional with experience in commercial insurance programs for propane and fuel distributors. She focuses on risk evaluation, program development and coverage design for energy-industry clients. Contact Sawyer at csawyer@nipgroup.com. Visit nipgroup.com.



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REDUCE RISK & IMPROVE EFFICIENCY WITH WINTER RIDE-ALONG DRIVER EVALUATIONS

One-on-one driver training sessions with safety professionals save you time & billable hours

BY BRENT CAMMETT



MEDITERANEO - STOCK.ADOBE.COM

Are your drivers ready for the busy season? As colder weather makes itself known, your propane drivers will be making more deliveries and dealing with poor driving conditions. It is critical to ensure that your propane delivery drivers have the proper training they need to complete their routes safely and efficiently. Ride-along driver evaluations are an invaluable training tool that propane companies can use to evaluate an individual driver's skills, maintain compliance protocols and protect the company from expensive accidents and unnecessary safety hazards.

If you are looking for ways to maximize the value of your propane safety training, driver safety evaluations are a great way to ensure your team members get the training they need without losing billable hours. Ride-along driver evaluations offer

a unique opportunity for your employees to receive critical training during regular business hours. The training professional will come to your business location and ride along with the trainee during their regular route.

Drivers benefit from one-on-one training and receive real-time feedback, and the management team is provided with valuable insights into employee performance and future training opportunities.

1. PROTECT YOUR EMPLOYEES & PREVENT COSTLY ACCIDENTS

A bobtail accident is an extremely dangerous situation that puts the driver and your company's reputation and financial stability at risk. Just one incident can result in thousands of dollars in vehicle damage, legal costs,

personal injury claims and regulatory fines. During ride-along driver evaluations, a propane safety expert will provide real-time coaching to reinforce defensive driving techniques, hazard awareness and other proper procedures.

This hands-on training helps drivers prevent costly accidents, protect your assets and maintain a strong safety record at your company.

2. EVALUATE PERFORMANCE & IDENTIFY TRAINING NEEDS

Ride-along propane driver evaluations are designed to benefit both your drivers and your management team. Driver evaluations allow trainers to see how your delivery team operates during active routes.

It is a good idea to conduct driver evaluations when your team is dealing

with poor driving conditions, such as snow and ice during the winter.

Delivery drivers will receive helpful tips and suggestions from their safety trainer, and your management team will be provided with a clear and accurate assessment of their drivers' winter driving practices.

3. KEEP DRIVERS ON THE ROAD

Because drivers are able to receive professional coaching during their regular routes, they can continue servicing customers without pulling units off the road or losing billable hours. Ride-along evaluations are integrated into the workday rather than scheduled around it.

This strengthens driver performance, reinforces compliance and proactively corrects unsafe habits without sacrificing your company's delivery schedules or

efficiency. Operations can continue on schedule while your team gets coaching that helps improve standards.

4. MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR PROPANE TRAINING BUDGET

Working with a professional safety consultant to complete your driver evaluations ensures that your training budget delivers real, measurable results. Relying on internal trial and error or using a generic program without real-time, personalized coaching can lead to dangerous mistakes and costly incidents in the field.

A professional propane safety trainer can bring years of insight, proven training methods and regulatory knowledge to your team.

5. AVOID FINES & INSURANCE COSTS

Propane safety experts recommend

that propane companies outsource their training to a full-time compliance expert familiar with federal guidelines and requirements in your jurisdiction. Drivers must follow Department of Transportation (DOT), Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) regulations.

Safety violations during audits and inspections can result in expensive fines for your business. Completing driver evaluations and training ensures that your team knows the exact standards expected of the job. A trainer can course-correct bad habits before violations have the opportunity to take place.

6. COMPLETE RISK MANAGEMENT REVIEW OF PROPANE INSTALLATIONS

Additionally, during ride-along driver evaluations, the safety consultant can



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complete on-site propane customer audits, including installation risk-management compliance reviews. During these reviews, the trainer will review on-site installations and make recommendations for improvement as needed.

Trainers can audit each installation visited along the delivery route according to NFPA 58 code requirements and identify any compliance issues. This protects your company from liability, improves operational safety and strengthens customer trust through documented safety oversight.

SCHEDULE DRIVER SAFETY EVALUATIONS NOW

If you are weighing cost and efficiency as deciding factors for your fall and winter training program, consider how ride-along driver evaluations can return your

Completing driver evaluations & training ensures that your team knows the exact standards expected of the job. A trainer can course-correct bad habits before violations have the opportunity to take place.

investment on both. Driver evaluations will help you fulfill the initial DOT requirements and NFPA 58 requirements, as well as ongoing refresher training requirements.

Make the most of your busy season and use this time to your advantage by providing your drivers with critical training without sacrificing billable hours or productivity. It's a win-win for your team and your company. Schedule driver ride-along evaluations with a certified

safety trainer now to get the most out of this critical training opportunity. ▀

Brent Cammett is the director of safety and training services at P3 Propane Safety. Cammett can be reached at brent.cammett@bostonenv.com or p3propane.com.



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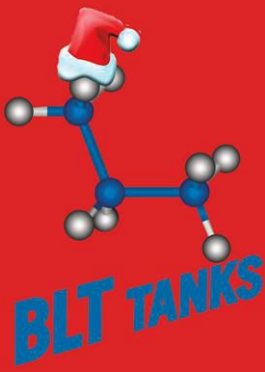
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Nancy Coop

Director
Cetane Associates



Nancy (middle) with her husband, children and grandchildren.

Can you describe your path in the propane industry?

My entry-level job in propane was president/owner of JARCO Propane Trucks, the company my dad founded in 1959. My husband and I acquired the business [in 2005 after my dad became sick]. I was not trained for this role, yet had plenty of guidance and worked hard to learn how to help the company flourish. In 2010, we sold the company and I was, by then, actively involved with the National Propane Gas Association (NPGA). It was my friend and mentor, Sam McTier, who encouraged me to keep working; he believed the rewards would be great. I was offered a role in business development with Ferrellgas and expanded my volunteer work within NPGA, including founding the business council, Women in Propane. In 2019, I was invited to work at Cetane Associates assisting with their efforts in mergers and acquisitions in the propane space. Shortly after coming on board, I pivoted to leading the marketing for the firm. This has been the favorite job of my life due to the caring, smart and thoughtful people on our team.

How has the industry changed over your career? Where do you hope it goes in the future?

During my 20 years in propane, I've seen the industry become more technology-driven both in the field and in the office. And overall there has been a push to modernize an industry previously known for being 'set in its ways.' That transition has been made in collaboration between the legacy leaders and the next generation with new skill sets. The wonderful part is to see these evolutionary updates and recognize that we have not lost, but in fact deepened, the friendly, collegial and often familial warmth and strength of our industry.

Can you share about starting the Women in Propane Council and what that has meant to you?

While serving on the NPGA Conventions Committee, a member, leader and friend, Tom Jaenicke, suggested our industry could benefit from a 'women in industry' organization. That single statement led to the NPGA Women in Propane Council as we know it today. It has been my passion to help create a robust and meaningful council that serves our entire industry by providing mentoring, education and networking. Established

in 2012, the council serves hundreds of industry members each year through its many programs and events. There were times when funding was difficult and growth felt like an uphill climb. Thanks to all the strong-willed leaders who joined in this effort and persevered, the council has become a beacon of personal development and leadership across our companies and our organizations.

What do you see as some of your greatest personal accomplishments?

Forming a steering committee and selecting great leaders as the first officers of Women in Propane established the foundation for a successful council. To find outstanding and willing people to spend their time and energy on a transformational council, starting from scratch, was rewarding. My gratitude is endless for Jill Hopkins, Jane Stroupe, Laurie Irish-Jones and Jennifer Jackson. These four, especially, made the journey possible and inspired others to join in the governance and growth.

What legacy are you leaving the industry with?

Leadership is available to anyone who is willing and ready to put in the effort to forge a path to leading their team, their company, their industry and beyond. Having a business council open to all industry members that supports colleagues on a path to leadership is the legacy, in my opinion. You or I may not look like the other leaders, yet that will not stop us from becoming leaders. The council will help you learn the skills and connect with influential industry members to help get you on your path.

How do you plan to spend your retirement?

In addition to drawing and hopefully making art, I plan to spend my time in retirement traveling with my husband in the U.S. and abroad. I want to be with my favorite people, both family and friends who are dear to me. I will volunteer with an organization that helps others. I am basking in gratitude for my life. I want to be of service. 🍷

Visit bpnews.com/industryinsider for an extended Q&A with Nancy, where she shares advice on growing leaders in the industry and reveals her hidden talent as a tattoo artist.



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