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JUNE 2026

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Dear Readers,
When I attended my first National Propane Gas Association (NPGA) Southeastern & International Propane Expo in 2023 as a newly minted member of BPN's editorial team, I did not know what to expect. On the drive up to Nashville, Tennessee, from my home in Birmingham, Alabama, I prepared myself by jumping ahead to the final stage of grief: I preemptively accepted the high likelihood that I would make a fool of myself at

some point. While that no doubt ended up being the case, I was pleasantly surprised to discover an industry that was down to earth and willing to walk through the details of their work with kindness and humility.

It's hard to believe it has already been three years since my first expo. The 2026 Southeastern Expo kicked off April 19, and with it, members of the propane industry from around the country — and the world — flocked to Nashville. Propane professionals set up booths, walked the show floor, and met with friends and business partners for lunches and dinners. For further details on this year's event, flip to page 28 to read BPN Managing Editor Christina Miller's retrospective covering key highlights and takeaways for the industry.

One major event at this year's expo was the second-annual award ceremony for the Young Professional of the Year. Each of the five finalists is shaping the future of the propane industry for the better. To learn more about the finalists — including the recipient of this year's award — take a look at page 32.

For BPN, this year's expo marked an opportunity for our remote team to see each other in person for the first time in a year — an occasion we often only remember to capture on camera after we've broken down our booth and are heading out the door. Thankfully, this year, the huge 'NPGA' letters in the lobby gave us a great spot for a photo op (see below).

As the summer heat sets in, it's a good time to consider the opportunity for propane in the outdoor space. Our feature series this month, "Heating, Hearth & Patio," hammers home what most of us already know: Propane fuels connections. Whether it be indoor heating for rural communities or portable fueling for communal outdoor activities, propane shows up where it's needed.

On page 24, take a look at how expanding your fuel offerings with outdoor heating can help retain key customer demographics year-round. Page 20 offers a specific example of diversifying your portfolio offerings, exploring why propane is an excellent choice of fuel for keeping outdoor pools comfortable. Sharing this information with your customers is a key step in ensuring you are their one-stop shop for fueling solutions.

With the onset of summer, it is also officially barbecue season. As demand for propane cylinders increases, consider some best practices on managing the operations of cylinder exchange on page 22.

Thinking back to my entrance into this industry, I thought I was being introduced to the strange new world of propane for the first time. In reality, propane has always been around me, silently but steadily fueling the things I care most about: a neighbor's start-up taco truck, grilled burgers on the back porch and family camping trips under the stars. The opportunities for propane are everywhere.

Until next time,

Johnny Nickel

JOHNNY NICKEL
Managing Editor



The BPN team from left to right: Managing Editor Johnny Nickel, Managing Editor Christina Miller, Editor-in-Chief Jessica Phillips and Senior Account Executive Landen Franklin



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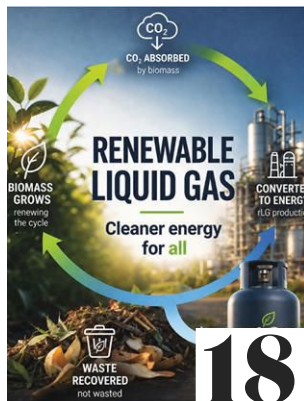
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Outdoor products create demand for fuel in the market — it's up to marketers to catch it

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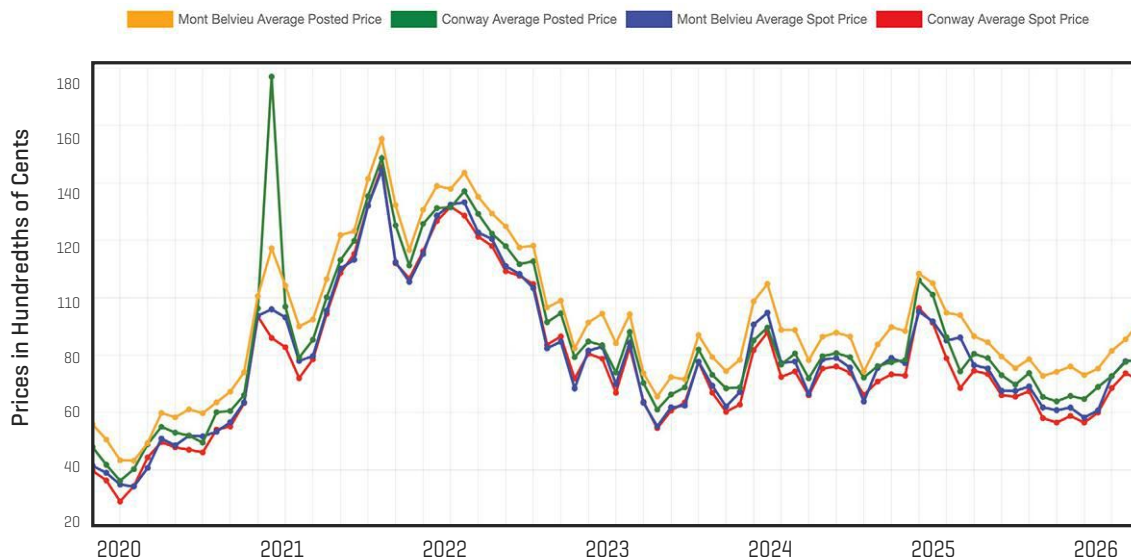
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Meet the young professionals making waves in 2026



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Outdoor living continues to provide steady opportunity for propane. Explore how marketers can take full advantage.
(Image credit: Wirestock - stock.adobe.com)

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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 11.5 cents/gal, from April mid-month to May mid-month, and spot prices increased 5.75 cents. Conway, Kansas, postings increased 6.5 cents/gal and spots increased 2.625 cents over the month.

Editor's Note: The above was the latest data available at the time of publication. BPN's official May mid-month report can be found at bpnews.com with data from May 14.

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

	04/09/26	04/16/26	04/23/26	04/30/26	05/07/26
Mont Belvieu					
posted	79.625	85.500	87.625	95.000	91.125
spot	72.250 – 73.000	77.750 – 78.000	80.875 – 91.250	83.500 – 84.000	78.000 – 78.500
Conway					
posted	72.120	77.560	79.495	85.560	78.620
spot	68.500 – 69.250	73.250 – 74.000	75.000 – 75.750	78.875 – 79.750	71.125 – 71.500

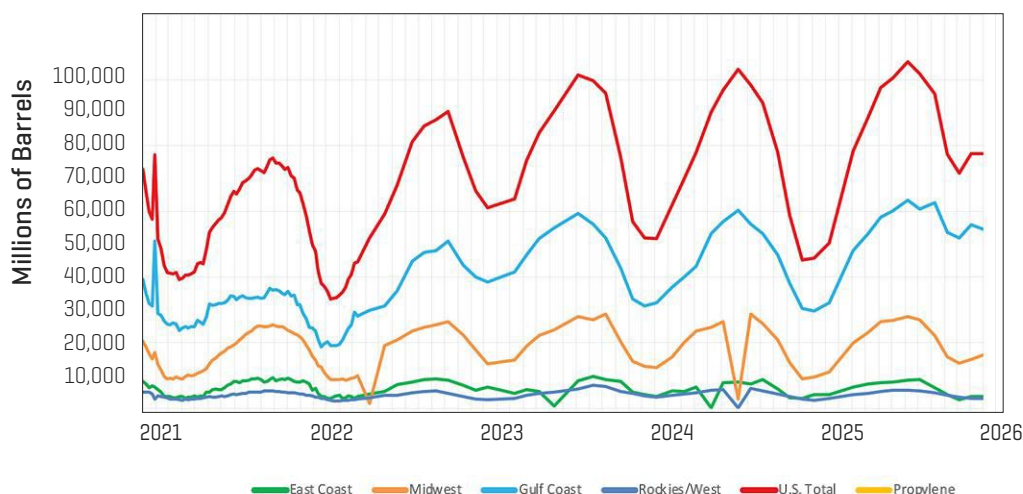
CANADIAN INVENTORIES [Thousand Cubic Meters]

at a glance Canada's primary underground propane inventories increased by 0.6% in April, according to the Canada Energy Regulator [CER]. The total represented a month-to-month increase of 2.5 Mcm. Compared to a year earlier, stocks were lower, with 47.8 Mcm, or 12%, more product on hand.
[Editor's Note: Due to BPN's publishing schedule, April inventory data is the latest available from the CER.]

PROPANE	Apr 2026	Mar 2026	Change	Apr 2025
Propane-East	93.2	98.9	-5.8%	107.0
Propane-West	353.1	345.0	2.4%	291.6
Total Propane	446.4	443.9	0.6%	398.6
BUTANE				
Butane-East	131.4	121.7	8.0%	148.5
Butane-West	517.1	455.6	13.5%	283.4
Total Butane	648.5	577.3	12.3%	431.9

Source: Canada Energy Regulator

U.S. PROPANE INVENTORIES



at a glance

United States propane stocks experienced a 40,000 bbl decrease from April to May.

East Coast stocks increased 36,000 bbl, the Midwest increased 1.29 MMbbl, the Gulf Coast decreased 1.352 MMbbl, and the Rocky Mountain/West Coast decreased 15,000 bbl. Compared to the same time in May 2025, the May 2026 stocks were 29.38 MMbbl higher.

U.S. PROPANE INVENTORIES

April 3 – May 1, 2026, and One Year Ago (Thousand Barrels)

	04/03/26	04/10/26	04/17/26	04/24/26	05/01/26	05/02/25
East Coast	3.599	4.031	4.742	3.598	3.635	4.102
Midwest	14.946	14.738	15.025	15.578	16.236	10.231
Gulf Coast	55.950	56.223	56.895	56.507	54.598	31.035
Rocky Mtn & West Coast	3.101	2.906	3.328	3.163	3.086	2.808
U.S.	77.596	77.897	79.990	78.846	77.556	48.176

Find out more:

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

Editor's Note: From April to the beginning of October, the Energy Information Administration does not report residential prices for propane. Publication of this data will resume with the November 2026 issue.

PROPANE TRANSPORT COMPANIES NAMED FOR 2025 PINNACLE AWARD

Pacific Railroad recognized 138 companies with the 2025 Pinnacle Award for their dedication and commitment to safely transporting chemicals by rail. The annual award honors customers that implement release prevention protocols and corrective action plans and have zero nonaccident releases of regulated hazardous materials shipments. Union Pacific shares the same objective as its customers to safely deliver every tank car every day, and 99.99% of the hazmat shipments moved by United States freight railroads arrive safely. Union Pacific's Hazardous Materials Safety team supports customers with joint rail safety training programs and railcar inspections. Hazmat teams are located regionally across Union Pacific's 23-state network with a four-prong mission: prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. With several propane transport companies recognized for the 2025 award, view the list of winners at tinyurl.com/2025-pinnacle-award.

PARACO NAMES DIRECTOR OF SALES & MARKETING



Jeremy Erlich

Paraco announced the addition of Jeremy Erlich as its new director of sales and marketing. Erlich brings extensive experience in driving revenue growth, leading cross-functional

teams and supporting strategic expansion. In this role, Erlich will help guide the company's sales and marketing efforts as it continues to invest in growth and enhance the customer experience. Paraco stated the following in a post announcing the hire: "We're excited to welcome Jeremy Erlich to Paraco as our new director of sales and marketing. Jeremy brings a proven track record of driving revenue growth, building high-performing teams and leading organizations through strategic expansion. He has a strong ability to connect sales, marketing and operations, turning strategy into execution and results. Prior to joining Paraco, Jeremy served as vice president of sales and

marketing at Moishe's Moving Systems, where he led cross-functional efforts to accelerate growth and strengthen market presence."

OSHA REVISES NEP ON HEAT-RELATED HAZARDS

Editor's Note: A version of this release was originally published by the National Propane Gas Association (NPGA).

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) revised its National Emphasis Program (NEP) on outdoor and indoor heat-related hazards on April 10. The update removes previous numerical goals for ramping up inspections and instead directs resources to about 55 high-risk industries based on recent injury and illness data. The program continues to prioritize outreach and inspections on high-heat days but remains a flexible enforcement tool under the General Duty Clause, with no new compliance requirements for employers. NPGA joined the Coalition for Workplace Safety in submitting Jan. 14, 2025, comments on OSHA's proposed Heat Injury and Illness Prevention standard. The coalition opposed the prescriptive rule and called for it to be significantly revised or withdrawn in favor of a more flexible, performance-based approach. This mirrors NPGA's earlier engagement through the Coalition on the Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking stage. The separate proposed rule remains stalled and has not been finalized at press time.

PERC COMMITS \$6M TO NEXIO TO ADVANCE PROPANE COMMERCIAL VEHICLE CERTIFICATION

The Propane Education & Research Council (PERC) has executed a \$6 million contract to support propane commercial vehicle certification through Environmental Protection Agency and California Air Resources Board approval of a dedicated propane-powered commercial vehicle platform and engine for the U.S. market. This expands the availability of practical, lower-emission solutions for commercial fleet operators nationwide. The investment will support

certification of medium- to heavy-duty Class 7 trucks, and a purpose-built 7.2-liter supercharged V8 propane engine manufactured by Nexio Power Inc. These configurations are designed for a range of commercial applications, including propane bobtail delivery and other work truck vocations. The approval reflects the propane industry's continued commitment to advancing technologies that strengthen propane's role in commercial transportation, an area where fleet operators are actively seeking proven alternatives to diesel that deliver measurable economic and emissions benefits without the infrastructure complexity of other fuel transitions.

EIA RELEASES THE ANNUAL ENERGY OUTLOOK 2026

The Energy Information Administration (EIA) released its Annual Energy Outlook 2026 (AEO2026) in April, covering data trends for a variety of energy sources in the U.S. It explores medium- and long-term alternative futures in the U.S. through 2050. AEO2026 enables the public to explore a suite of alternative pathways for energy depending on assumptions made about markets, technological breakthroughs and policy. Key takeaways:

- Technology drives more efficient consumption of energy in the United States through 2050.
- Data center load is emerging as the dominant driver of long-term U.S. electricity growth.
- To meet electricity demand, installed electric generating capacity increases between 50% and 90% by 2050 across cases, shaped by natural gas prices and renewable technology costs.
- Natural gas production grows significantly by 2050 in most cases, driven by domestic and international demand.
- With only modestly increasing Brent crude oil prices over the long term and dwindling prime drilling acreage, U.S. crude oil production remains relatively stable, decreasing slightly by 2050.
- Future U.S. coal demand depends on environmental policy as coal plant retirements drive coal demand lower. 📉

Industry Calendar

June 14-17 Southeast Propane Alliance Summer Meeting
southeastpropane.org
Isle of Palms, SC

June 16-18 Colorado/New Mexico Convention Annual Meeting
copropane.com
Ignacio, CO

June 17 New Jersey PGA Annual Board of Directors Meeting
njpga.org
Trenton, NJ

June 23-26 Tennessee PGA Annual Meeting
tngas.org
Pigeon Forge, TN

June 23-24 North Dakota PGA Annual Meeting
ndpropane.org
Medora, ND

June 24-26 Pennsylvania PGA Annual Summer Meeting
papropane.org
Bedford, PA

June 29 – July 2 Alabama & Louisiana PGA Joint Meeting
npga.org
Pensacola Beach, FL

July 6-8 Missouri PGA Family Outing & Board Meeting
propanemissouri.com
Camdenton, MO

July 8-10 Kentucky PGA Summer Convention
kygas.org
Covington, KY

July 9 Oklahoma PGA Board Meeting
okpropane.org
Oklahoma City, OK

July 12-15 Virginia PGA Summer Membership Meeting
propaneva.org
Virginia Beach, VA

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

FOR ADDITIONAL CALENDAR ITEMS, VISIT BPNEWS.COM.



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Shane Steele, Primemax Energy Inc.

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Whitney Parsley is an associate at the mergers and acquisitions (M&A) advisory firm Cetane Associates and specializes in M&A and corporate governance. Contact Parsley at wparsley@cetane.com. Visit cetane.com.

WHAT'S A MOMENT IN YOUR CAREER THAT CHANGED HOW YOU SEE YOUR WORK? — PART 2

Respondents review the key events that altered the course of their career

This month, we hear from the other half of our responders on their career-defining moments. 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.

FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

I had a moment one evening shortly after I took over the company, when I had started going to benchmarking. I thought about how much I was learning and how little I really knew about my newly acquired business. At that moment, safety and education became a high priority for me — not to simply depend on the team I was leaning on, but to make sure I was there to inspect what I expected. There’s nothing more important than the safety of our customers and the employees working on their appliances. It was at that point I felt [it was] not only important to make sure my team was well educated, but that our community had a better understanding of who we are and what we do. Shortly after that, I began my elementary

school’s Propane Kid’s Day. There is safety and knowledge!

JUDY TARANOVICH
PROCTOR GAS INC.
PROCTOR, VERMONT

One moment that really changed how I see my work was during an event we host every summer for kids called ‘Hometown Heroes.’ It was our first time hosting this event in 2019 and I had everything planned perfectly, from logistics to giveaways and setup. On the day of the event, what stood out to me the most wasn’t anything I had planned for or on my checklist. It was the joy on the kids’ faces as they met local heroes, climbed into a police car and ... got to turn on the siren. Just as meaningful were the expressions on their caregivers’ faces, watching those moments unfold. That experience shifted my perspective. While we are, at our core, a propane and appliance company, I realized that the heart of what we do is building relationships and trust within our community. Since then, I’ve approached every event — and really, every aspect of my work — with a stronger focus on

creating meaningful experiences, not just executing a plan.

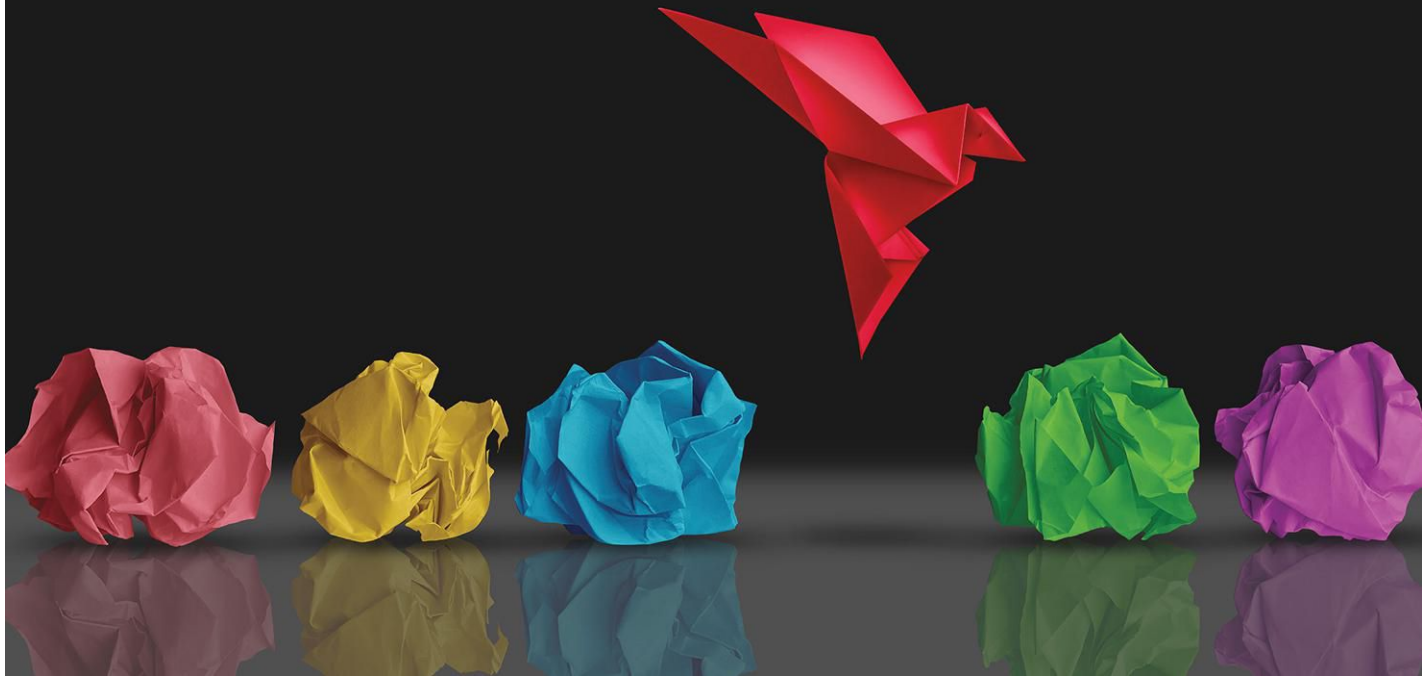
KIRSTEN U. MCALPIN
CONGER LP GAS INC.
TIFTON, GEORGIA

When we (my father and I) bought a used, small bobtail and started to deliver with a hose and not by exchanging 100-pound cylinders.

RICHARD STRYCHARZ JR.
WALTER’S PROPANE
SUNDERLAND, MASSACHUSETTS

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE BUSINESS

I have always been eager to grow in my career. Early years were full of learning from mistakes and developing my skills. Once I got into executive management, I had a much different perspective. I earned my master’s in international business in 2007. The education I received helped me immensely. It all made sense to me and now I was able to raise the bar for myself. Since then, I have been more aware of how my employees think, act and perform. I put myself in their shoes before I make hard decisions. Empathy and doing the work to make



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sure I was comfortable with the decisions made me gain respect from my team. We can learn something every day of our lives. I have had a rewarding career putting people and facts first.

ED VARNEY
TOPLINE MANAGEMENT
MCKINNEY, TEXAS

Countless moments with customers have changed how I see my work. I've spoken with people who were cold, going through major life challenges or simply struggling to get by, and those conversations stay with you. It's easy to get caught up in the day-to-day of accounts, installations and deliveries, where the work can start to feel transactional. Those moments are a reminder of why we do this in the first place. There is a real human side to this business that cannot be overlooked. I truly love helping customers, and I am happiest when I leave a conversation knowing they feel relieved. I have laughed with customers, cried with them — yes, really — and made decisions that balance what is right for both the customer and the business. Those

experiences have grounded me and continue to shape how I approach my work every day.

STACI RAMMEL
WOODRUFF ENERGY
BRIDGETON, NEW JERSEY

There was a moment when my perspective shifted: I realized I wasn't just working for myself and my family anymore. The livelihood of our employees is tied to the decisions we make every day. That realization changed everything. It made each choice more intentional, knowing that what we decide doesn't just impact us, but the people who trust us with their future.

CHARLIE CRISWELL
CRISWELL PROPANE INC.
GRINNELL, IOWA

A moment in my career that changed how I see my work was when I was out having dinner with a customer and we just started talking about life in general (our families, current views on politics, sports, etc.) that lasted for hours. It made me realize that work was not about just doing what your role is and servicing

the customer, but also learning about who they are as a person and their background. It's really changed how I approach talking to anyone (colleagues/friends). I'm more interested to really see how they're doing and learning more about their background than just getting the job done because it's a requirement we meet.

SAM FUNG
EMERSON AUTOMATION SOLUTIONS
MCKINNEY, TEXAS

One moment in my career that reshaped my perspective on work happened when I had to call a customer to admit I'd given them the wrong answer. The experience was humbling, and it left a lasting impression. I was anxious about their reaction, convinced that I would let them down and damage their trust. However, much to my surprise, the customer was grateful for my honesty and the quick correction. This response taught me the value of transparency and integrity, even when it's uncomfortable. I often share this story with new team members as a reminder that doing the right thing, especially when it's difficult, builds trust

and strengthens relationships.

ABBY THURSTON
RURAL COMPUTER CONSULTANTS
BIRD ISLAND, MINNESOTA

BEYOND THE DESK

The moment that changed how I see my work was at the age of 19. I was a college student, working my way through college. I was promoted to manager over the cashiers and bag boys (yes, we carried out groceries for our customers), and I was responsible for customer service. I was working 40-plus hours a week and taking a full load of on-campus classes. I not only thrived, but I also loved it. I no longer looked at what I did as a job. I began to see an opportunity to show my employer and my customers that my presence made a difference. I was given more opportunities, and after graduating from college I stayed in the grocery business for over 17 years before

leaving and starting over in the propane business. That promotion fueled my desire to one day be an owner. Today, I'm the largest owner in our company, and I still love what I do every day.

DANIEL R. RICHARDSON
CONGER LP GAS INC.
TIFTON, GEORGIA

I can't point to a single turning point in my career; instead, it's been a collection of small, meaningful moments that continuously reshape how I view my work. One moment that stands out, though, was when my professional skills supported a family friend's mission to raise awareness and funding for metastatic breast cancer research. Collaborating with a dedicated team to plan events, create promotional materials and expand outreach showed me that my work has value far beyond the office. It can strengthen communities, elevate

important causes and bring people together in ways that feel both purposeful and deeply human.

LUCY SHAFFER
SHAFFER'S BOTTLED GAS INC.
HOOVERVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA

LESSONS LEARNED

Whether you experienced a clear "aha moment" or learned something through trial and error, each of these moments shapes how we approach our work. By refining our processes, rethinking our strategies and remaining open to change, we continuously improve. Ultimately, it's this willingness to learn that drives progress, strengthens our work and helps us achieve greater success over time.

I also wanted to note that Judy Taranovich is retiring and embarking on a new chapter. Judy, we wish you all the best and thank you for the meaningful contributions you've shared with us. 🍁

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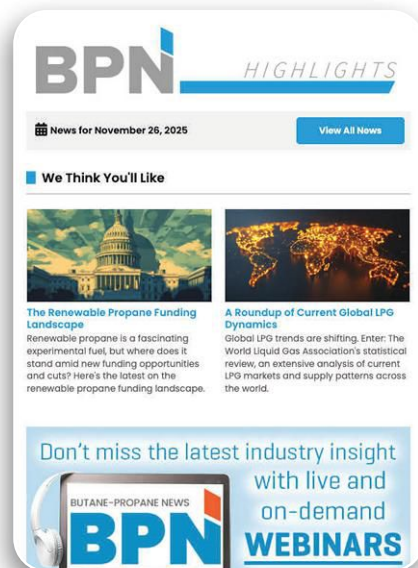
Larry Hearn, Owner, Yellow Rose Propane



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NEW YORK COURT AFFIRMS REJECTION OF PROPANE DRIVER DISABILITY CLAIM

The case examines whether afflictions like PTSD qualify for disability insurance & the potential limitations of existing statutes

The job of a propane delivery driver is not an easy one, and sometimes it can present hazards. In the event of a serious on-the-job injury, there are multiple potential remedies for the injured employee, not the least of which is worker's compensation benefits under applicable state law. But an additional possible remedy is a claim for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits under federal law. Such claims are rigorously examined and are not always granted.

A good example is found in the March 9 decision of a federal court in Islip, New York, denying the disability claim of a propane delivery driver injured on the job. The case is *Ancken v. Commissioner of the Social Security Administration*.

DETACHED NOZZLE

The driver in this case, Paul von Ancken, was making a delivery to a customer tank that served a swimming pool heater. As the tank was being filled, the nozzle somehow became detached from the delivery hose. The court opinion provides

no details as to how this happened, but in any event, the result was a very large release of propane into the area. The propane vapor ignited and the driver was injured, sustaining burn injuries to multiple parts of his body. He also developed anxiety after the incident, experiencing panic attacks triggered by memories of the event.

Von Ancken filed a claim for SSDI benefits. He asserted he was completely disabled and pointed to his burn injuries, also claiming post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety and depression. These injuries, he said, rendered him unable to engage in any substantial gainful employment. The claim was denied, and von Ancken exercised his right to a hearing before an administrative law judge.

SEVERE IMPAIRMENT?

The central question in the administrative hearing was whether von Ancken had a disability within the meaning of the Social Security Act. The statute says that to qualify as a disability,

the impairment must be "of such severity that the claimant is not only unable to do his previous work but cannot, considering his age, education and work experience, engage in any other kind of substantial gainful work which exists in the national economy." The regulations that implement the statute provide a list (called Appendix 1) of impairments that will automatically qualify as a disability, if supported by medical evidence. Severe burns are on the list, but PTSD, anxiety and depression are not. If the claimant does not have a listed impairment, they can still qualify for disability if they can show that they do not have "residual capacity" to perform their past work. They will then qualify for disability unless the government can show there is other work they can perform.

So it was in this context that an administrative law judge considered von Ancken's disability claim. First, the administrative judge concluded that von Ancken's impairments were not on the Appendix 1 list. (Apparently the judge believed the burns the driver sustained in



the incident were not sufficiently severe.) He then considered evidence on two issues: (1) Could the driver perform his past work as a propane delivery driver, and (2) If not, could he perform other work at jobs available in the economy? Evidence considered included testimony from treating physicians and other consultants presented by the claimant, as well as “independent” consultants who serve on an approved panel and are paid by the government.

CHERRY PICKING?

After considering the evidence, the administrative judge concluded that the claimant could not return to his job as a propane delivery driver. However, the government was able to present evidence showing the driver could perform other types of work, such as “office helper, laundry aide and quality checker.” Based on this evidence, the administrative judge concluded the claimant was not disabled, and his claim was denied. The delivery driver appealed to federal court, which considered whether there was

“substantial evidence” to support the administrative judge’s ruling.

Von Ancken had a right to appeal this decision to federal court, which he did. On appeal, he raised two points. First, he said the administrative judge failed to properly consider the opinion of his treating psychiatrist, in effect “cherry picking” those opinions that were adverse to von Ancken. Second, he argued the administrative judge failed to consider the opinion of another consulting psychiatrist, who said that von Ancken could only work part time.

MIXED BAG

Dr. Burke, the psychiatrist who actually treated von Ancken, had submitted a report that was a mixed bag of conclusions. In some areas, such as “ability to relate to others,” he concluded that von Ancken had only moderate limitations. However, in others, such as “ability to sustain a routine with special supervision” and “ability to respond to customary work pressures,” he concluded that the limitations were “marked” or

“extreme.” These latter opinions, in the court’s view, were “not adequately supported in Dr. Burke’s treatment notes and were inconsistent with other evidence in the record.”

The court therefore found that the administrative judge properly evaluated the Burke report.

The other consulting psychiatrist’s opinion that von Ancken could work only part time were viewed by the administrative judge as “unpersuasive because they were conclusory and inherently neither valuable nor persuasive.” The court found that the administrative judge therefore had “complied with applicable regulations and appropriately evaluated” his opinions and overall conclusions.

Since the court found that von Ancken had produced no evidence of severe impairment, it therefore concluded the administrative judge’s denial of von Ancken’s claim was legally correct and supported by substantial evidence in the record. It affirmed the denial of the claim for disability. ■



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THE ONE BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL ACT & WHAT IT MEANS FOR PROPANE DELIVERY COMPANIES

100% bonus depreciation, an upgraded Section 179 limit & other features of the spending bill stand to benefit propane companies' wallets

If you run a propane delivery business, your balance sheet looks nothing like a tech startup's. You've got bobtail trucks at \$150,000 to \$200,000 each, bulk storage tanks, customer cylinders scattered across a service territory, monitoring systems, service vans and compressors. Capital intensity is built into the business model. So is debt, especially if you've been growing through acquisitions.

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA), signed into law in 2025, has a lot to say to a business like yours. The headline provisions, including permanent 100% bonus depreciation and a doubled Section 179 limit, get most of the press — but they're not the whole story. The law also adjusts the rules on interest deductions for leveraged businesses, raises the State and Local Tax (SALT) cap, makes the qualified business income deduction permanent and impacts purchase price allocations for buyers acquiring businesses. That last piece deserves more attention from propane dealers than it's been getting.

BONUS DEPRECIATION & SECTION 179

Start here, because it affects almost every capital decision you make. Under the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, businesses could write off the full cost of qualifying equipment in the year it was placed in service. That 100% rate had been stepping down (80% in 2023, 60% in 2024) and was scheduled to disappear by 2027. The OBBBA restores 100% bonus depreciation for qualifying property acquired and placed in service after Jan. 19, 2025 — and makes it permanent.

For a propane company, qualifying property covers most of what you buy: delivery trucks, service vehicles, compressors, tank monitors and most equipment with a useful life of 20 years or less. Put a \$180,000 bobtail into service today, and you deduct \$180,000 this tax year. Used equipment also qualifies as long as it's new to your business, which matters when buying pre-owned trucks or acquiring fleet assets through a company purchase.

Section 179 has been upgraded

alongside it. The annual deduction limit doubled from roughly \$1.25 million to \$2.5 million, and the phase-down threshold rose from about \$3.13 million to \$4 million, with both figures adjusting for inflation going forward. For regional operators making multiple investments in a single year, that's a much wider runway before the phase-down bites.

Section 179 is also useful for property that doesn't qualify for bonus depreciation, like roofs, HVAC systems and other improvements to nonresidential buildings. And for businesses operating in multiple states, where many states don't conform to federal bonus depreciation rules but do follow Section 179, the upgraded limit is often the more reliable planning tool.

ACQUIRING BUSINESSES: THE PIECE MOST DEALERS ARE MISSING

Here's where propane dealers who are actively acquiring other companies should sit up. The combination of permanent 100% bonus depreciation and a favorable purchase price allocation can

compress the tax recovery period on an acquisition from decades to a single year for the right assets.

When you buy a propane business, you're buying a collection of assets: customer lists, customer tanks, vehicles, bulk storage, noncompete agreements, goodwill and possibly real property. The purchase price is allocated across the asset classes under a negotiated agreement between the buyer and seller. Each class carries a different tax treatment. Goodwill and customer lists are Section 197 intangibles, amortized over 15 years. Vehicles, tanks and equipment are personal property, depreciable over five to seven years, and are now eligible for immediate 100% expensing.



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The practical implication: A buyer who shifts value away from goodwill and toward tangible personal property — like trucks, tanks, compressors and cylinders (within acceptable IRS regulations) — can potentially deduct a large portion of the purchase price in year one. A seller often prefers the opposite, since gains on goodwill and Section 197 intangibles qualify for capital gains treatment, while gains on tangible property may trigger ordinary income or depreciation recapture. This tension is negotiable and it has real dollar value.

In the current acquisition environment, where propane territories are consolidating and multiples are being paid for established customer bases, the after-tax cost of a deal can differ depending on how the purchase price is split. Even small structural changes can have financial impact, which is why your certified public accountant and attorney need to be working together on this

from the term sheet stage, not after the purchase agreement is signed.

THE QBI DEDUCTION: NOW PERMANENTLY ESTABLISHED

If your propane company is structured as an S corporation, partnership or sole proprietorship (which describes many independent dealers), the qualified business income (QBI) deduction has been a meaningful benefit since 2018. It allows eligible pass-through owners to deduct up to 20% of qualified business income, effectively reducing the top federal rate on that income from 37% to around 29.6%. The catch was always that it was set to expire after 2025.

The OBBBA makes the QBI deduction permanent. For dealers who have been deferring compensation decisions or distribution timing because of the scheduled expiration, that uncertainty is gone. You can build the QBI deduction into your long-term tax structure without

worrying about a future legislative pullback. For most independent propane dealers, it's a significant improvement in the after-tax economics of operating as a pass-through entity.

THE SALT CAP: A REAL BENEFIT FOR HIGHER-INCOME OWNERS

The \$10,000 cap on state and local tax deductions has been raised to \$40,000 for individuals, with a phase-out for very high earners. This directly benefits propane company owners in high-tax states like Massachusetts, Connecticut, California and New York, where state income taxes alone can exceed the old ceiling.

The math can be meaningful. An owner of a profitable pass-through business in Massachusetts, paying 5% state income tax on \$500,000 of business income, has \$25,000 in state tax that previously disappeared above the cap. Under the new \$40,000 limit, most of

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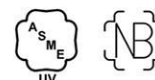
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that is deductible again at the federal level. Whether this benefit fully applies depends on total income and the phase-down, but for the typical owner-operator of a successful regional dealership, the SALT increase is a real improvement.

SECTION 163(J) & THE INTEREST DEDUCTION: BETTER NEWS FOR LEVERAGED BUYERS

If you've used debt to finance acquisitions or capital investment, you're familiar with the Section 163(j) limitation on business interest deductions. Since 2022, this provision has limited the deduction for net business interest expense to 30% of adjusted taxable income calculated without adding back depreciation and amortization, making the ceiling considerably tighter for capital-intensive businesses.

The OBBBA restores the more favorable EBITDA-based calculation for tax years beginning after Dec. 31,

2024. (EBITDA is a widely used measure of a company's financial health.) Depreciation and amortization are added back before calculating the 30% cap, resulting in a higher ceiling and more current deductible interest expense. For a propane company carrying significant acquisition debt, this can meaningfully increase the amount of interest it deducts in a given year. If your company is highly leveraged and making large equipment or acquisition investments, your tax adviser should explicitly model the interaction between 163(j) and bonus depreciation, rather than treating them as separate issues.

THE PRACTICAL TAKEAWAY

The OBBBA didn't change what propane companies need to buy or build. You still need reliable trucks, working tanks and the operational infrastructure to serve your customer base. What changed is how the tax code treats the money you

spend building that infrastructure, and, for dealers growing through acquisitions, how much of a purchase price you can recover and how quickly.

Bonus depreciation is permanent and back at 100%. Section 179 is substantially more useful. The QBI deduction is no longer expiring. The SALT cap has been raised. And the interest deduction rules are more favorable for leveraged businesses. Any one of these is worth a conversation with your adviser. Together, they represent a materially different planning environment than existed 18 months ago.

For dealers actively acquiring, add one more item to that conversation: purchase price allocation. That benefit doesn't happen automatically; it has to be negotiated, documented and planned from the start of the transaction. The dealers who understand this will have a meaningful advantage over those who don't. ▀



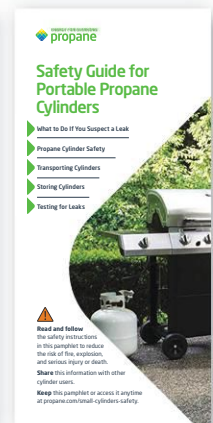
Safety Is a Shared Responsibility

June is National Safety Month — a reminder that safety is more than a priority. It's a responsibility we share every day.

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RENEWABLE PROPANE'S GLOBAL OPPORTUNITY: WHAT NORTH AMERICA CAN LEARN FROM THE WORLD'S FASTEST-GROWING LIQUID GAS MARKETS

Renewable propane offers a practical path to decarbonization by leveraging existing infrastructure & meeting global energy demands

BY JAMES ROCKALL

IMAGE COURTESY OF WORLD LIQUID GAS ASSOCIATION

Renewable propane is often discussed as a niche decarbonization story. In reality, it is one of the most practical global opportunities to reduce emissions without asking consumers, industries or governments to rebuild entire energy systems from scratch.

Too much of the energy transition debate assumes success only comes from replacement: replace the appliance, the vehicle, the infrastructure, the consumer behavior. However, the fastest and most resilient decarbonization often comes from improvement, not replacement. Renewable propane — and renewable liquid gas more broadly — sits exactly in that space.

The greatest opportunity exists wherever three things coincide: existing propane dependence, hard-to-abate heat, and other energy demand and policy systems that reward real life-cycle carbon reductions rather than simple tailpipe accounting.

That is why Europe, Asia, North America and parts of South America are the most immediate growth markets, albeit for very different reasons.

RENEWABLE PROPANE ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE

Europe is the clearest example of demand-led opportunity. Net-zero commitments are aggressive. Industrial heat, but also commercial and domestic heat, often remains difficult to electrify, and policymakers are confronting the limits of “electrify everything.” High-temperature applications such as steel, ceramics, food processing and manufacturing require practical fuels.

The Björneborg Steel case in Sweden is instructive. In the past, they switched from oil to propane, achieving lower CO₂ emissions and reducing air pollution. Recently, they demonstrated a cut in their direct scope 1 greenhouse gas emissions from 257 kilograms (kg) to 223 kg CO₂ equivalent per ton of steel by blending 20% renewable dimethyl ether (DME) and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), while maintaining identical furnace performance with no burner modifications. With the last move to 100% renewable DME operation in one of their four furnaces, they completely eliminated scope 1 emissions, proving

that decarbonization can be achieved without operational sacrifice, ready for the demand from their customers.

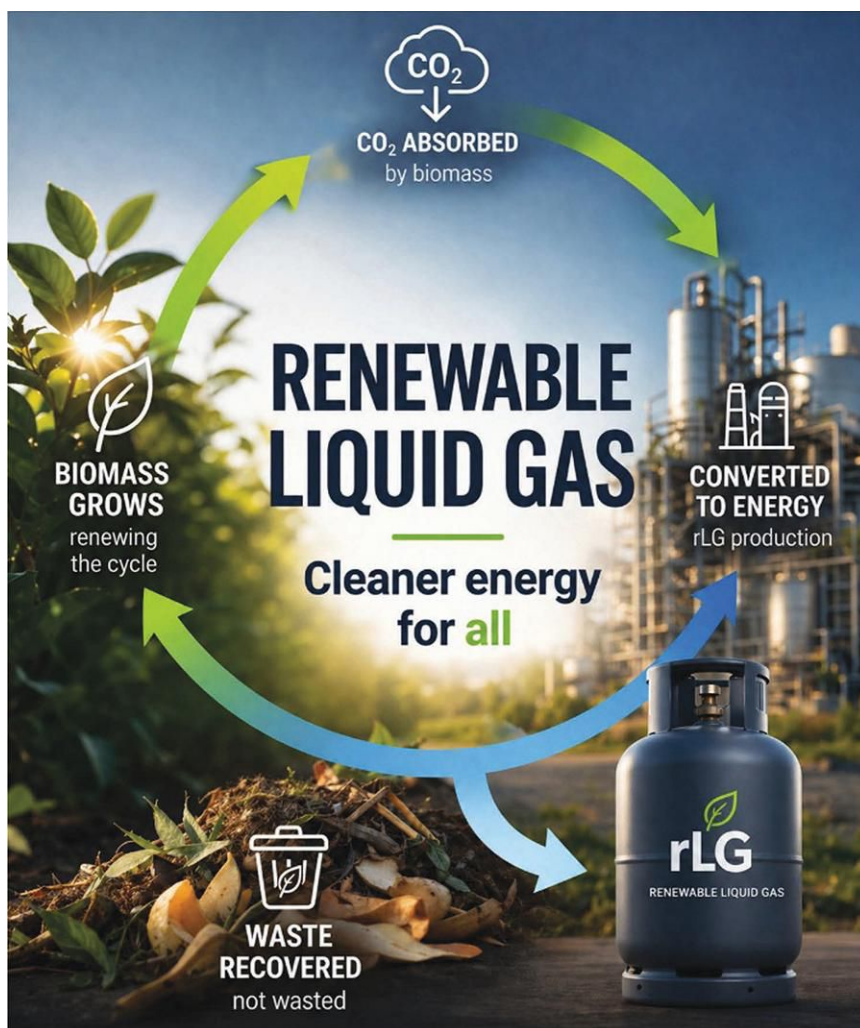
Asia is the scale story. Population density creates enormous demand, and this is also combined with vast feedstock availability from organic waste streams and more. Millions of households already depend on LPG for clean cooking, while commercial and industrial sectors require scalable fuels that can be transported, stored and deployed quickly.

Renewable propane here should be seen as part of a broader discussion around energy security, resilience and long-term decarbonization. Governments are already advancing biofuels where scale and economics allow it. India, for example, has moved aggressively on ethanol blending in gasoline, reaching 20% blending far faster than many expected. This shows that bio-based fuels can move from policy ambition to practical reality when they support both affordability and security of supply.

The same logic applies to renewable propane. It is not yet displacing traditional LPG at scale, but it offers a future pathway that protects the gains already made in clean cooking while lowering carbon intensity over time and promoting a circular economy with locally sourced renewable feedstocks. Replacing solid fuels with propane already delivers major health benefits, with World Health Organization estimates showing that moving households away from traditional biomass for cooking could prevent millions of premature deaths annually.

South America is the feedstock story. Nearly 30% of global ethanol production already sits there, creating strong potential for alcohol-to-fuel pathways. Brazil has long balanced affordability, scale and decarbonization rather than treating them as mutually exclusive. Renewable propane production linked to ethanol and biofuel systems could make the region a major export hub if policy frameworks remain stable enough to justify investment.

North America, however, is where the strategic lesson may be most interesting.



RENEWABLE PROPANE IN NORTH AMERICA

The United States and Canada have abundant feedstocks, strong agricultural residues, lipid pathways, renewable diesel expansion and sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) mandates that naturally support coproduction of renewable propane. In the near term, this gives North America a genuine advantage. The World Liquid Gas Association's (WLGA) recent analysis suggests North America could become one of the largest renewable liquid gas production centers globally, driven by hydrotreated vegetable oil, hydroprocessed esters and fatty acids, coproduction, and other pathways.

But North America also risks learning the wrong lesson.

Too often, renewable propane is treated as a by-product rather than a strategic product. It is seen as what

falls out of renewable diesel and SAF economics, not as a fuel deserving direct policy recognition. That is too narrow.

Globally, propane has always succeeded because it solves multiple problems at once: affordability, resilience, portability, lower emissions and speed of deployment. Renewable propane should be viewed the same way.

North America can learn from global propane applications: molecules matter most where electrons struggle. Industrial heat, rural energy access, agriculture, hospitality, backup resilience and off-grid applications are not niche cases; they are core energy systems. Europe understands this mostly in industrial decarbonization and rural energy access. Asia understands it in clean cooking and distributed access. Africa understands it in resilience and development.

The real lesson is that renewable propane should not be forced to compete

only inside a transport policy box. Its value is broader. It is a drop-in, scalable decarbonization tool across domestic, commercial, agricultural and industrial markets. It works with existing cylinders, storage, logistics, ports and customer behavior. That infrastructure advantage is not a legacy problem but a strategic asset.

Globally, WLGA estimates that renewable liquid gas production could reach 60-120 million tons by 2050, with a central estimate of 88 million tons LPG-equivalent, delivering annual carbon savings of up to 238 million tons of CO₂. Without policy support, production may fail to reach even a quarter of that potential. Governments must adopt technology-neutral frameworks based on measurable life-cycle outcomes. If a molecule reduces emissions, improves resilience and uses existing infrastructure, it should qualify. Tailpipe-only metrics distort decisions.

Renewable propane is not the entire answer to decarbonization, but it is one of the few answers that works in the real world today, across continents, sectors and income levels. Our future energy systems need to be sustainable, low carbon, pragmatic, affordable and resilient. Renewable propane belongs at the center of that conversation. ■

James Rockall is the CEO & managing director of the World Liquid Gas Association. Based in Paris, he has full responsibility for legal, financial, operational, strategic, governance and performance-related aspects of the organization with over 300 clients operating in more than 125 countries around the world. Rockall has 30 years of global experience in the energy sector. He has a strong energy and business development background, having worked for Shell International in senior management positions in the Netherlands and Venezuela. Prior to joining WLGA, Rockall worked as a director of the global energy group Alstom SA. He is a fellow of the U.K. Institution of Chemical Engineers with a master's degree with honors from the University of Nottingham in the U.K. and a Master of Business Administration from the International Institute for Management Development in Lausanne, Switzerland.



ARE YOUR CUSTOMERS MISSING OUT ON OUTDOOR LIVING?

5 key benefits homeowners need to know about propane-heated pools

BY OLIVIA BEAVON

A photograph of a modern backyard pool area at sunset. In the foreground, a long, rectangular stone fire pit with a wooden grate is filled with dark stones and has a bright fire burning in it. To the left of the fire pit is a wooden pergola with a slatted roof. In the background, there is a swimming pool with a waterfall edge, a green lawn, and a line of trees under a sky with soft orange and pink clouds.

The propane firepit, the grill connected to a gas line and the gas lanterns surrounding the pool — all of these amenities create a beautiful, propane-powered backyard oasis. However, there is one key feature that is often overlooked and can take your customers' outdoor spaces to the next level: propane-powered pool heaters.

By understanding how propane pool heaters work and how to market them effectively, you can help your customers maximize their outdoor living space.

HOW DO PROPANE POOL HEATERS WORK?

Propane pool heaters operate by burning propane fuel within a combustion chamber. Pool water circulates through copper heat-exchanger coils, where it is warmed by the combustion process. The heated water then flows back into the pool, delivering consistent, comfortable temperatures on demand.

5 WAYS TO MARKET POOL HEATERS TO YOUR CUSTOMERS

Pool heaters are one of the most underrated outdoor propane applications. Without a propane-powered pool heating system, customers are missing out on the full potential of their outdoor living experience. Ahead are five key benefits you can highlight when marketing propane pool heaters, along with best practices to support each message.

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1. Extend the Swimming Season

Pools are a significant investment, so it makes sense to help customers get the most out of them. Propane pool heaters allow homeowners to open their pools earlier in the spring and close them later in the fall — or even enjoy swimming year-round in some climates.

With a longer swimming season, customers may also reduce the need for early pool closing or extended use of pool covers. Ultimately, a heated pool delivers more value and more enjoyment throughout the year.

2. The Perfect Combination of Comfort & Convenience

Propane pool heaters provide fast, efficient heating, quickly bringing pool water to a comfortable temperature. Because propane delivers on-demand heat, the pool is only heated when the system is turned on, improving overall energy efficiency.

This ability to heat water quickly makes propane a convenient option for homeowners who want flexibility without long wait times.

3. Where Other Systems Fall Short

Several alternative pool heating options exist, but each has limitations. Heat pumps rely on warm air temperatures, solar heaters depend on consistent sunlight and electric resistance heaters are often expensive to operate and less efficient.

Propane pool heaters, on the other hand, work quickly and reliably regardless of outdoor conditions, making them ideal for use into the fall and winter months. They are typically more cost-effective than electric systems and operate independently of the electrical grid, allowing homeowners to heat their pools even during power outages.

One unique advantage of propane is its ability to deliver consistent performance regardless of air temperature. No matter how cool the weather gets, propane-heated water returns to the pool warm and ready to use.

4. An Environmentally Friendly Heat Source

Propane is a clean-burning, domestically produced fuel, making it an appealing option for homeowners concerned with energy independence and environmental impact. It emits significantly fewer carbon dioxide emissions than electricity generated from the grid and is recognized as a clean fuel under the Clean Air Act.

For environmentally conscious customers, propane offers a responsible way to enjoy pool heating without sacrificing performance.

5. Easy Installation & Reliable Low Maintenance

Once the propane tank and pool heater are installed, ongoing maintenance requirements are minimal, especially when compared to other heating systems. With proper care, propane pool heaters are durable, long-lasting and capable of providing many years of reliable service.

BEST PRACTICES FOR INSTALLING & ESTIMATING POOL HEATERS

Use a Tank Monitor

One best practice to establish when installing a propane pool heater is the use of a tank monitor. Because pool heaters significantly increase fuel consumption, closely tracking propane usage is essential to maintaining a reliable delivery schedule.

Installing a tank monitor allows both the homeowner and the propane provider to monitor fuel levels accurately, helping prevent customers from running out of propane during peak swimming season. With increased visibility into usage patterns, tank monitors support proactive deliveries and improve overall customer satisfaction.

Choose the Heat Source Early in the Planning Process

Ideally, the decision to use propane for pool heating should be made as early as possible, preferably when the homeowner first decides to install a pool. Tank size, placement and proximity to

the pool should all be considered during the planning and design stages.

Keeping propane top of mind during early conversations significantly increases the likelihood that customers will choose propane as their primary fuel source rather than defaulting to alternative systems.

It is also important to educate customers on Btu requirements and fuel consumption. A propane pool heater will increase fuel usage compared to summer-only demands, and setting realistic expectations helps safeguard customer satisfaction.

WORK WITH A TRUSTED LOCAL POOL COMPANY

Many propane providers do not sell or install pool heaters directly. Building a strong relationship with a trusted local pool company allows both parties to refer customers to one another — pool professionals for heater installation and propane providers for tank installation and fuel supply.

These partnerships create mutually beneficial opportunities for long-term customer acquisition and growth.

Many customers simply aren't aware that propane-powered pool heating is an option. By using these key points and best practices, you can educate homeowners on the benefits of propane and position it as the top fuel choice for pool heating long after summer ends.

Propane-powered pool heaters not only enhance outdoor living but also create new sales opportunities while delivering lasting value to your customers. 📌

Olivia Beavon is the vice president of marketing for Foster Fuels Inc. Beavon is a dynamic marketing leader with a passion for driving brand visibility, engagement and revenue growth. She brings over a decade of expertise in marketing for both B2B and B2C strategies. You can contact her at olivia.beavon@fosterfuels.com or visit fosterfuels.com.



BEYOND THE CAGE: THE OPERATIONAL SIDE OF BARBECUE CYLINDER EXCHANGE

As consumers prioritize reliable energy in outdoor living, here's how marketers can orchestrate a successful exchange business

BY CHRISTINA ARMENTANO



If you've spent time in the barbecue cylinder exchange business, you learn quickly that this is not traditional propane delivery. It moves differently. It reacts differently. And the companies that succeed in this business understand that you cannot manage cylinder exchange the same way you manage a heating season.

Cylinder exchange is fast-moving, weather-sensitive, retail-driven and operationally intense. One warm spring weekend can completely change demand patterns. A rainy holiday weekend can slow volume overnight. And two locations just a few miles apart can perform completely differently.

That's what makes this business unique, but also what makes it such a great opportunity for retailers and partners looking for a reliable, scalable exchange provider.

At Paraco, we've learned over decades that success in cylinder exchange comes

down to operational discipline, asset management, forecasting and most importantly, responsiveness. Our roots began in the industrial gas business when my grandfather started the company in 1968, so cylinders have always been part of our DNA. From tracking and maintaining assets to understanding how critical cylinder availability and reliability are to customers, that early foundation shaped how we approach the exchange business today.

CLOSER TO RETAIL THAN YOU THINK

While propane companies often think seasonally, barbecue exchange behaves much more like retail logistics.

Demand is driven by:

- Weekend traffic
- Weather patterns
- Holidays and local events
- Store-specific buying behavior
- Consumer convenience and inventory visibility

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A sunny Saturday in April can create more demand than an entire cold week earlier in the month. Memorial Day volume can swing dramatically year to year based solely on weather. That means broad regional forecasting only gets you so far. The real insight comes from understanding what is happening at the store level.

THE BEST OPERATORS THINK STORE-BY-STORE

For us, this has always been a store-by-store business. From the beginning, we understood that broad regional forecasting only tells part of the story. The real operational intelligence comes from understanding what is happening at the individual account level.

You begin to identify:

- Which locations are consistently busy
- Which stores require tighter delivery frequency
- Which accounts can handle longer cycles
- Which locations need proactive support before peak weekends

The reality is simple: If you are not closely monitoring cage turns, delivery patterns and account-level inventory, you are missing critical information.

For retailers, that matters because consistent in-stock performance directly impacts customer experience and sales. Empty cages during peak weekends hurt both the retailer and the propane provider.

FORECASTING MATTERS — BUT ADAPTABILITY MATTERS MORE

Every company builds preseason projections — you have to. But in cylinder exchange, what separates strong operators from average ones is not who builds the perfect forecast — it is who adjusts the fastest once the season starts, because conditions always change.

We regularly see:

- Early warm weather pulling demand forward
- Holiday surges outperforming projections

- Regional weather shifts changing buying patterns overnight
- Certain stores dramatically outperforming expectations

The companies that succeed are the ones constantly reviewing performance and adjusting quickly — not waiting until month-end reports to react.

YOUR ROUTES TELL THE REAL STORY

In many ways, your routing operation becomes the ultimate forecasting scorecard. If drivers are constantly reacting, making emergency trips, doubling back or dealing with frequent runouts, the system is telling you something.

On the other hand, when operations are disciplined with efficient routing, predictable stops and consistent inventory management, it usually means forecasting and execution are aligned.

CYLINDER EXCHANGE: AN ASSET MANAGEMENT BUSINESS

One important part of this business is cylinder management itself. Paraco's roots began in the industrial gas business back in 1968, where cylinder tracking, refurbishment and maintenance were core to the operation. That operational mindset still plays a major role in how we approach cylinder exchange today.

The reality is, if you do not have strong control over your cylinder assets, you do not have strong control over your exchange business. That is why infrastructure matters.

At Paraco, we also benefit from having our own cylinder production and refurbishment facility in Waterbury, Connecticut.

That capability gives us greater control over asset quality, inventory visibility, turnaround times and overall supply reliability. In a business where cylinder availability can directly impact customer experience and sales, the ability to internally refurbish and manage assets provides an important operational advantage, especially during peak demand periods.

'PERSONAL TOUCH' MEANS OPERATIONAL OWNERSHIP

The propane industry talks a lot about customer service and personal relationships. In cylinder exchange, that comes down to ownership and accountability. The best operations have people who truly know their accounts and stay close to the business.

They understand:

- Which stores are vulnerable to runouts
- Which accounts need added attention
- Which locations can flex operationally
- Which retailers have unique seasonal patterns

That kind of operational ownership does not come from spreadsheets alone. It comes from experience, consistency and staying connected to the field.

The barbecue cylinder exchange business continues to evolve alongside changing consumer lifestyles and energy needs. Today, propane plays a growing role in outdoor living — from grilling and patio heating to outdoor kitchens and entertaining spaces. At the same time, more homeowners are thinking about energy reliability and backup power solutions, especially as severe weather events and grid concerns continue to increase. Because of these trends, we continue to see strong, long-term opportunity and sustained usage growth in the barbecue exchange business.

As those trends continue, the demand for safe, reliable propane supply and strong retail exchange programs will only become more important. 📌

Christina Armentano is chief operating officer and executive vice president of Paraco Gas. Family-owned and operated for three generations, Paraco is committed to exceptional customer service, safety, innovation and operational excellence. Paraco has served the Northeast since 1968, supplying propane for residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural and barbecue cylinder exchange applications across the region. Learn more about Paraco at paracogas.com.





HOW PROPANE DEALERS CAN INCREASE CUSTOMER RETENTION **THROUGH OUTDOOR LIVING**

Outdoor products create demand for fuel in the market — it's up to marketers to catch it

BY LYNNAE HOLMES

IMAGE COURTESY OF MODERN HOME PRODUCTS

The rise in outdoor living is reshaping propane demand. Propane dealers who recognize this shift have a great opportunity to build deeper customer loyalty and more consistent revenue throughout the year.

THE RETENTION CHALLENGE IN THE PROPANE INDUSTRY

For most consumers, propane is invisible — simply a fuel that powers appliances quietly in the background and only noticed when the tank runs low. That invisibility creates a persistent problem for propane dealers where price is often the only differentiator a customer sees.

The National Propane Gas Association has long acknowledged that customer churn remains one of the industry's most significant challenges. When consumers can switch suppliers with a phone call



— and often save money by doing so — loyalty is hard to manufacture through fuel supply/delivery alone.

A quiet but powerful shift in consumer behavior is increasing residential customers' need for propane. Dealers who expand into outdoor living products like grills, fire pits, patio heaters, gas lighting and outdoor kitchens are finding that propane transforms from a line item into a must-have for the outdoor lifestyle. When that shift happens, customers don't just stay longer — they buy more.

THE OUTDOOR LIVING OPPORTUNITY

Outdoor living has evolved from a niche interest into a mainstream home improvement priority. According to the Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association (HPBA), the outdoor living market now represents more than \$20 billion

in annual United States consumer spending. Grand View Research has shared that consumer interest in at-home entertaining, and the blurring of indoor/outdoor living environments, continues to fuel steady growth projections through the end of the decade and beyond.

Grills represent the most direct entry point for customers. Let me share a few more numbers:

- The HPBA estimates that over 70% of U.S. households own a grill.
- Market Growth Reports states that over 33 million propane grills were sold in the U.S. in 2023.
- According to the 2024/2025 Grand View Research Barbecue Grill Market report, propane dominates the gas grill segment by a ratio of nearly 9-to-1 over natural gas.
- Another expanding segment, propane-fueled outdoor heating — including outdoor heaters and fire pits — is expected to gross more than \$2 billion in sales by 2033, according to a Freedonia Group industry report.

These are strong statistics that make the math for propane dealers straightforward, especially when you consider that customers who buy gas grills need propane to use it.

The market has already created the demand. The question is who captures the relationship.

WHY OUTDOOR LIVING DRIVES RETENTION

The connection between outdoor living products and customer retention is driven by three main points.

1. **Increased fuel usage:** Grill ownership creates a recurring propane demand that heating-only accounts don't generate. The Propane Education & Research Council (PERC) has identified outdoor cooking as one of the highest-growth segments of propane consumption because ownership of outdoor gas appliances translates directly into gallons. More appliances mean more reasons for the customer to rely on the dealer's services.

Propane transforms from a line item into a must-have for the outdoor lifestyle.

2. **Habit formation:** A family that grills several times a week during the summer months may require refills multiple times per season. Each interaction reinforces the relationship and reduces the likelihood of switching. Customers with higher touchpoint frequency are less likely to switch providers; the relationship becomes the default.
3. **Higher customer lifetime value:** A customer who purchases a grill, patio heater, gas lighting and fire pit through a dealer has made investments that are difficult to replicate with a competitor. The switching cost is no longer just inconvenience — it involves potentially replacing equipment and losing a service relationship. PERC data shows that multi-appliance propane households consume more gallons annually and remain customers longer than single-appliance households.

PROPANE'S COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE OVER BIG BOX & E-COMMERCE RETAILERS

Big box and e-commerce retailers stock a wide range of outdoor living products at competitive prices. For a consumer with no existing relationship with a propane dealer, a big box store is the path of least resistance. But there is a glaring limitation: The transaction ends at the checkout.

When a customer buys a grill from big box or e-commerce, the retailer's involvement ends. There is no recurring fuel relationship, no installation/maintenance service and no one calling

them to confirm they are stocked up before Memorial Day weekend. A propane dealer can sell the product and become the customer's long-term fuel and service partner — a fundamentally different proposition.

This distinction compounds as products grow in complexity. Based on a 2025 Global Growth Insights report, approximately 38% of the gas grill market is shifting toward higher-end multifunctional grills, largely driven by the popularity of outdoor living spaces for home entertainment.

A freestanding grill is one thing. An outdoor living space with built-in appliances and gas lighting along pathways all with dedicated propane lines requires expertise that a box-store associate simply cannot provide. Local dealers who develop installation and service capabilities are no longer

competing with big box retailers — they are offering something the big box stores cannot.

STRATEGIES TO DRIVE RETENTION THROUGH OUTDOOR LIVING

Product Bundling

Grill-plus-tank-plus-first-fill packages simplify the purchase decision and anchor the customer's first fuel transaction with the dealer. According to PERC, bundled promotions combining appliance sales with fuel incentives consistently outperform standalone product offers in driving first-time and repeat purchases.

Loyalty & Refill Programs

Structured incentives like reward programs that offer points for refills and/or seasonal promotions tied to grilling seasons give customers a reason to return. Customers who understand their

loyalty will be rewarded are measurably less likely to price shop competitors.

Showroom & Demonstration Experiences

The HPBA has documented that hands-on product interactions dramatically increase purchase intent and that customers who receive cooking education alongside a product sale develop stronger brand attachment than those who receive none. Dealers who create a destination showroom, rather than a transactional retail floor, are investing in relationships that price competition cannot easily win over.

Expansion Beyond Grills

Fire pits, patio heaters, gas lighting and outdoor kitchens each represent additional demand and deeper customer investment. HPBA market data shows that customers who purchase one



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outdoor living category are significantly more likely to purchase adjacent categories within two years, making cross-category expansion a natural retention strategy.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER

An honest assessment requires acknowledging the costs. Entering the outdoor living retail business is not a low-investment decision.

Stocking grills and related accessories requires up-front capital and ongoing inventory management across seasonal cycles. Investment in staff training is also a prerequisite; selling outdoor living products effectively requires product knowledge that fuel delivery employees may not possess automatically. The strategy only works when dealers compete on expertise and service, not price. Dealers who try to undercut the big

box retailers on price alone will lose. Those who build a differentiated service model will win.

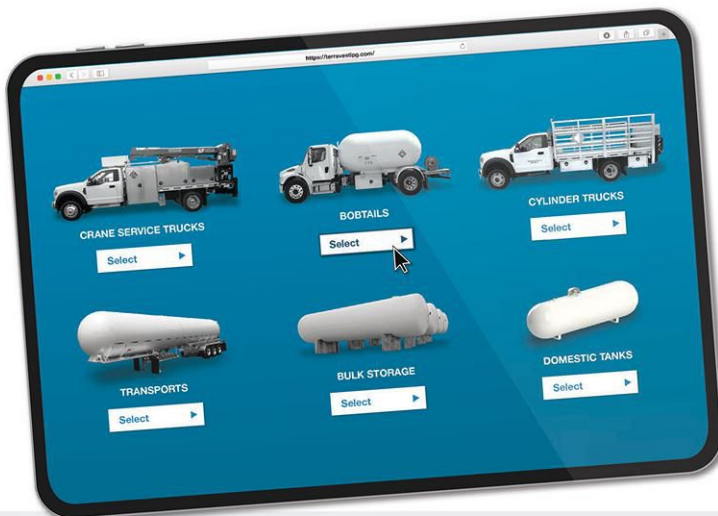
FROM COMMODITY TO LIFESTYLE BRAND

Propane alone is a commodity — evaluated and switched based on cost per gallon. On the other hand, an outdoor living space is an experience with retention based on the quality of the relationship and the value of the services attached to it.

Dealers who have successfully made the shift report higher-than-average revenue per customer, lower churn and more predictable seasonal demand. A customer retained for 10 years at a higher annual spend is worth multiples of a customer retained for three years at an average spend. An outdoor living strategy expands both variables at the same time.

Propane dealers have always had the raw material for this kind of relationship, a fuel that powers the products people love most in their outdoor spaces. The dealers who will outperform their competitors in the years ahead are those who stop selling fuel and start selling experiences that fuel makes possible. 🍷

Lynnae Holmes has been the marketing manager for Modern Home Products (MHP) for over 20 years. Since 1957, MHP has designed and manufactured quality outdoor gas grill brands including MHP, ProFire, Phoenix and Charmglow, along with Everglow gas lighting. In addition, MHP also produces a line of OEM and aftermarket parts. Visit mhpgrills.com.



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THE 2026 NPGA SOUTHEASTERN EXPO FOCUSES ON OPPORTUNITY, LEADERSHIP & ENERGY RESILIENCE

Industry leaders highlighted propane's growing prospects in energy, technology & leadership development at this year's expo

BY CHRISTINA MILLER

NPGA's Stephen Kaminski opens the 2026 Southeastern Expo.

The National Propane Gas Association's (NPGA) 2026 Southeastern & International Propane Expo brought propane professionals from across the country back to Nashville, Tennessee, for three days of networking, education and industry discussion centered on growth, resilience and the future of energy.

Held April 19-21 during the United States' 250th anniversary year, the convention carried a patriotic theme throughout its opening ceremony and educational programming. Industry leaders emphasized propane's role as a domestic energy source and encouraged marketers to embrace new opportunities emerging from changes in the broader energy landscape.

PROPANE & THE AMERICAN ENERGY STORY

Opening the show, NPGA President and CEO Stephen Kaminski connected the story of the propane industry to the broader story of America, highlighting

themes of innovation, perseverance and opportunity that continue to shape both.

Mike Hopsicker, NPGA chair, followed with remarks focused on advocacy and energy choice.

"This year marks our 250th anniversary of the founding of our country," Hopsicker said. "And as Americans, we enjoy ... an abundance of opportunities."

Hopsicker acknowledged the challenges the propane industry has faced in recent years while encouraging attendees to continue promoting propane's value to consumers.

"Americans deserve energy choice," he said, "and the opportunity to choose propane for their energy needs."

Hopsicker also encouraged attendees to remain active within the association and continue supporting industry advocacy efforts at both the state and national levels.

"The best way to fight for our industry is to market propane," he said.

A 'POWER PLAY' FOR THE INDUSTRY

The opening sessions continued with remarks from Tucker Perkins, president and CEO of the Propane Education & Research Council, who framed the current moment as one of the industry's greatest opportunities.

"We stand on the dawn of the greatest point in our history of this industry," Perkins said.

Throughout his address, Perkins pointed to growing concerns surrounding electric grid reliability, increasing electricity demand and global instability as factors creating new opportunities for propane marketers.

"We sell exactly what people want," Perkins said. "Because we are reliable, we're affordable, we're abundant and we're safe."

Perkins also discussed the growing conversation around AI and data centers, arguing that the resulting strain on the electrical grid could create downstream opportunities for propane-powered

systems and backup energy solutions.

“It is completely changing the fragility of the grid,” Perkins said. “It is completely changing the cost of electricity, and it is creating for us one of the best opportunities we’ve ever seen.”

He encouraged propane marketers to think beyond traditional uses while continuing to strengthen existing residential, agricultural and commercial relationships.

“We need to rethink our love affair with the generator,” Perkins said while discussing whole-home energy systems and propane-powered backup solutions.

Perkins frequently returned to the concept of a “power play,” urging propane marketers to put their focus on operational excellence, safety and technology adoption as the industry evolves.

“What’s your power play?” he asked attendees. “Is it to become operationally excellent? Is it to lower your cost of delivery while increasing your ability to



“Through the Leadership Lens” live podcast panel from left to right: Jessica Balderston, Stephen Kaminski, Nancy Coop, Warren Patterson, Kim Folger and Freddie Ridler.

be reliable, using the technology that’s available out there today?”

Perkins also praised propane company employees from across the country for their performance during the recent

winter heating season: “[I] love to celebrate the men and women [who] pulled hoses, checked our tanks, made sure the tanks were full and got it done,” he said.

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Kirsten McAlpin speaks after winning the 2026 Young Professional of the Year Award. Fellow finalists (from left to right) look on: Alex Young, Krysta Wanner, Andrew Vogland and Amanda Bohm Rodicio.

EDUCATIONAL SESSIONS ADDRESS INDUSTRY CHALLENGES

The expo's educational programming reflected many of the same themes discussed during the opening sessions. Educational sessions focused on market conditions, technology, leadership development and the changing energy landscape.

One such session, "U.S. Propane Market Outlook — Iran, Exports and Production," examined the impact of geopolitical instability on international propane markets. Presented by Adam Baker and Scott Potter of RBN Energy LLC, the session explored how global tensions have affected propane exports, inventory outlooks and global demand.

The session also addressed questions surrounding future export capacity and how increasing international demand could influence U.S. propane supply and pricing moving forward.

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LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT & INDUSTRY GROWTH

Leadership development remained another major focus throughout the convention. On April 20, the Women in Propane (WIP) Roundtable hosted a live edition of the “Through the Leadership Lens” podcast. The session, hosted by Rural Computer Consultants’ Jessica Balderston and Freddie Ridler, encouraged attendees to reflect on mentorship, leadership growth and professional development within the propane industry.

The interactive event included audience discussion and focused on leadership style, mentorship and recognizing potential in others.

Balderston, who serves as co-chair of programs and events for WIP, discussed the importance of connecting and supporting propane professionals throughout the industry. Ridler also

shared perspectives shaped by his years working with propane marketers and his involvement with NPGA programs.

The convention also highlighted the importance of supporting future industry leaders through the Young Professional of the Year Award, which shared a joint ceremony and reception with WIP this year. The event brought attendees from across the industry to celebrate leadership and professional growth while recognizing award recipients and the ongoing work of both councils.

The ceremony started with the Women in Propane Council honoring Nancy Coop, now retired, with the inaugural Nancy Coop Leadership Award. The ceremony then shifted to the 2026 Young Professional of the Year, which was awarded to Kirsten McAlpin of Conger LP Gas. The two awards recognized both Coop’s and McAlpin’s many contributions to the industry.

LOOKING AHEAD

The expo’s keynote was delivered by Dr. Mary Kelly, CEO of Productive Leaders and a former Navy intelligence officer, whose remarks added to the event’s broader focus on leadership and adaptability during a period of rapid change across the energy sector.

Among all the sessions and networking events, the 2026 expo emphasized both continuity and change. While speakers celebrated propane’s long-standing role in American energy, they also challenged attendees to embrace technology, strengthen operations and prepare for opportunities tied to power generation, grid reliability and energy resilience.

“The opportunity is unbelievable right now,” Perkins said. “And it’s right there for us to take.”

Christina Miller is managing editor of Butane-Propane News magazine.



Safety Starts with Training

June is National Safety Month and strong safety starts with a well-trained team. The PERC Education Program (PEP) gives propane professionals access to industry-leading training designed for real-world application across every role – from drivers and technicians to office and sales staff.

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 Propane Education & Research Council



THE YOUNG PROFESSIONALS MAKING WAVES IN 2026

The Young Professional of the Year Award recognizes individuals 40 and under who demonstrate leadership, engagement and achievement in the industry. In the pages ahead, meet the 2026 Young Professional of the Year, as well as her fellow finalists, and learn how they exemplify these traits in their careers as they lead the industry into its next chapter.

Everyone has their unique story of how they started a career in propane, but how many can say they went from the country music industry to a marketing role at a propane company? That's Kirsten McAlpin's journey, from a country music and radio career, where she endorsed Conger LP Gas on her radio show, to the director of marketing and public relations for the company. After making videos and conducting interviews with Conger LP Gas President Dan Richardson, she joined the marketing team in 2018 and the rest is history.

You may have heard Kirsten's name in several scenarios, including the Women in Propane Council, the Southeast Propane Alliance and, of course, being named the 2026 Young Professional of the Year. Standing on stage with her fellow finalists, Kirsten was recognized for this honor at the 2026 National Propane Gas Association's Southeastern & International Propane Expo.

Speaking on the experience, Kirsten was quick to bolster the accomplishments of her fellow finalists — a sign of the care and importance she places on her industry peers.

The 2026 Young Professional of the Year

Kirsten McAlpin

Director of Marketing & Public Relations
Conger LP Gas Inc.



"It is truly an honor not only to have been named a finalist but to receive the 2026 Young Professional of the Year Award," she said. "I was genuinely blown away by the accomplishments of the other finalists. ... Alex, Amanda, Andrew and Krysta, it was such an honor to stand alongside you at the ceremony. I have so much respect for each of you and the incredible work you're doing, and I'm proud to be part of our industry with professionals like you."

Kirsten's experience at the award ceremony drove home the importance of investing in young professionals as a generation of industry members heads into retirement.

"It really hit me when we were standing there at the awards ceremony watching Nancy Coop receive the [first] Women in Propane Nancy Coop Leadership Award. It made me realize that we — my fellow nominees and all the younger professionals in the propane industry — are up next to fill all the amazing shoes of those who have paved the way. We are the next generation of propane professionals who will one day be looked to for guidance. What we do now and how we lead will directly shape what comes next.

"For me, encouraging my peers starts with leading by example," she continued. "I will stay actively involved, share my ideas and support industry initiatives. I also believe in telling the propane story well and showing others that this industry has strong communities, meaningful careers and real impact."

Kirsten's proud of the events she's planned with Conger LP Gas, like their

Hometown Heroes Kids Events (a back-to-school tradition at the Tifton, Georgia, home office where kids explore vehicles, equipment and gear up close) and company grand openings. But she's particularly proud of what she gets to bring to her role in everyday situations, including sharing a customer's positive experience, highlighting the work of Conger's employees and standing at chamber of commerce ribbon cutting ceremonies to represent the company.

Her marketing efforts for both Conger LP Gas and industry groups like the Women in Propane Council demonstrate her commitment to telling propane's story. She sees her biggest contribution to the industry as helping to shape how companies view marketing and their overall performance. Kirsten consistently hears positive feedback on how she shares Conger LP Gas' story through advertising and online presence — driving home the fact that telling your company's story can elevate your presence and connection with community and customers.

Kirsten hopes to see that spirit of storytelling become the norm in the propane world, to show how individuals are contributing to the industry's future.

"From the service technicians and drivers to the customer service representatives and office staff, each person adds so much value, and they all have a story that is worth telling," she said. "I think if people truly understood all the potential roles out there, from service to operations, finance, marketing and beyond, it would create more trust and a stronger future for the industry." 🏠

Growing up in a family-owned propane company gave Amanda Bohm Rodicio an early introduction to the industry, but her passion for propane truly developed in college. Amanda, now manager at Sunrise Propane, entered the industry in 2021 while completing the full-time work experience requirement for her college major. With both her grandfather (the company's founder) and her father deeply involved in the business, propane has long been part of her life.

As a younger leader in the industry, Amanda said she quickly learned the importance of earning trust through hands-on experience. Rather than stepping directly into management from behind a desk, she spent time shadowing drivers, tank setters, gas pipers and sales staff to better understand the business.

"I found that the best way to do that was by being hands-on, asking questions and learning every aspect of the business from the ground up," she said. "That hands-on experience was crucial in shaping how I approach leadership."

One of the accomplishments Amanda

Andrew Vogl began his career at Morgan Stanley before the culture of the propane industry led him to Ray Murray Inc.

It's a story that tracks with so many young professionals in this industry: Propane puts people first. For Andrew, this is evident in everything from the culture at Ray Murray Inc., where he serves as the director of national accounts, to industry events.

"One of my favorite memories has been attending industry events and seeing firsthand how strong and connected this community is," said Andrew. "Being able to step away from day-to-day business and connect with people across different companies, regions and roles has been extremely rewarding."

This people-first culture drives much of Andrew's goals in his career, as well as his track record of advocating for the propane industry on a large scale. In addition to growing and strengthening Ray Murray's national partnerships, Andrew serves as chairman

2026 Young Professional of the Year **Finalist**

Amanda Bohm Rodicio
Manager
Sunrise Propane

is most proud of is earning her Master Qualifier Gas License. At just 19 years old, she achieved her Category 1 601 Qualifier License, the highest level available in Florida for someone under 21.

"Reaching that milestone so early in my career was incredibly meaningful to me, as it reflected both my commitment to learning and my dedication to the industry," she said.

Looking ahead, Amanda hopes to continue expanding Sunrise Propane while also helping educate communities about propane's reliability, efficiency and identity as a clean energy solution. She sees strong opportunities for growth

through both innovation and education.

"I believe there is a real opportunity to bridge the gap between perception and reality when it comes to propane."

To Amanda, the future of the propane industry depends on young professionals staying engaged, continuing to learn and bringing new ideas to the table while building on the foundation established by previous generations.

"There is a tremendous amount of knowledge and experience in this industry, and when you combine that with the innovation and energy of younger professionals, it creates real opportunity for growth," she said. ▀



2026 Young Professional of the Year **Finalist**

Andrew Vogl
Director of National Accounts
Ray Murray Inc.

of PropanePAC, a political action arm of NPGA, and previously served as treasurer for the New York Propane Gas Association.

"I'm proud of the momentum [PropanePAC has] built — expanding engagement, increasing participation and hitting key fundraising milestones that strengthen the industry's voice at both the state and national levels," said Andrew. "Helping grow awareness around the importance of advocacy and getting more professionals involved has been especially meaningful."

To Andrew, a big part of industry involvement is putting in the time and effort to understand it.

"My advice [to someone entering the industry] would be to take the time to truly understand the business and how the industry operates," he said. "Learn the fundamentals, stay curious and build a strong base of knowledge early on. Be willing to put in the work, ask questions and stay consistent in how you show up every day. This industry rewards those who are reliable, proactive and willing to keep improving." ▀



The early stages of Krysta Wanner's career in political science came in handy when an exciting opportunity opened up at the Western Propane Gas Association (WPGA). Her background, including a job at a local propane company the summer before college, set her up to become WPGA's manager of government affairs.

Now the director of government affairs for WPGA, Krysta develops relationships with state policymakers and advances propane causes through government advocacy. Her experience as a young professional in propane has been marked by respect and exciting opportunities.

"Throughout my career, I have gotten used to being the youngest person and often the only woman in the room," she said. "The difference working as a young person in the propane industry is that I am much more respected than I was in government work. My members ... respect my experience in policymaking and treat me as an equal."

Krysta is heavily involved with NPGA's

2026 Young Professional of the Year **Finalist**

Krysta Wanner

Director of Government Affairs
Western Propane Gas Association



Young Professionals Council (YPC) and was a key player in building the Young Professional of the Year Award program.

"Having built the program for this award during YPC's inaugural year, I also feel really proud to see it continue on with collaboration from Women in Propane," she said.

Krysta will continue to play a key role in the YPC going forward as the 2026 YPC chair. For Krysta, serving her members is always at the center of her achievements.

"I try to keep in mind the importance of my role within the association and the

people whose livelihoods I am fighting to protect," she said.

Part of that fight is Krysta's work in promoting energy choice, both in California where WPGA is based and across the country. It is about "putting the power in the hands of the people to decide what best suits their needs."

"My job is not to force legislators to promote propane above all else," Krysta said, "but to educate them on how propane is a clean, affordable and reliable fuel choice that deserves to be a part of the conversation on energy solutions." 🏠

If you had asked Alex Young at 20 years old if she would be working in propane, she would have laughed. With a degree in broadcast news under her belt, Alex began working for a local TV station in her hometown of Columbus, Ohio. Though she loved it, work-life balance was difficult, so she decided to shift gears and join Worthington Enterprises.

"I started in the corporate communications department and worked part time with the cylinder business," she said. "I eventually moved into a full-time role supporting the industrial cylinders business. What really drew me in was the propane group itself — the camaraderie, the energy and how people show up for each other. It has been a fun ride so far."

Alex's proudest achievement is how she has transformed Worthington's approach to marketing — shifting her role from reactive support to a strategic partner for sales and leadership. She has also supported product, technology and brand launches and championed

2026 Young Professional of the Year **Finalist**

Alex Young
Marketing Manager, Heating &
Cooking Products
Worthington Enterprises

involvement in Women in Propane, the Young Professionals Council, and state and regional associations.

Additionally, Alex encourages other young professionals to "take advantage of growth opportunities within the propane industry while staying approachable and supportive." This includes stepping outside of comfort zones and getting involved, a mindset that helped Alex build new relationships and strengthen existing ones herself. This is of utmost importance as younger generations step into leadership roles and move the



needle on the industry's future.

"It is important to give young professionals a sense of ownership in where the industry is headed," she said. "When they are actively involved, it not only supports their development, but also brings fresh thinking that helps keep the industry ... moving forward."

On her nomination, she said, "This nomination is such an honor, and it speaks to the incredible talent coming up through the ranks in this industry. I am grateful to be part of that next generation and excited for what is ahead." 📌



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GROWMARK

A cooperative-driven energy supplier supporting propane marketers across North America



GROWMARK's roots run deep in the cooperative spirit that has long defined the propane and agricultural industries. Built on a foundation of shared ownership and collaboration, the organization has spent decades helping its members strengthen operations and better serve their communities. From supply reliability to workforce development and technology investments, GROWMARK continues to position its members for success in a rapidly changing energy landscape. In this Marketer Spotlight, the team shares how its cooperative model shapes decision-making and supports propane marketers across its network.



Can you share GROWMARK's history and how the organization operates today?

GROWMARK's story is deeply rooted in the evolution of American agriculture. Our organization traces its origins back to 1927, when farmers across the Midwest began forming local cooperatives to secure reliable access to fuel, fertilizer and crop inputs. These early co-ops learned that by working together, they could strengthen their operations and stabilize their communities. The federated cooperative model and ground-up ownership structure shape every strategic decision made today.

What regions and customer segments does GROWMARK serve? Where are you seeing the most growth or opportunity right now?

Our operations are heavily focused on the Midwest, the East Coast and the Southeast. We also supply our members in Ontario, Canada. We believe residential homeowners are looking for an affordable and efficient way to heat and power their homes. Data centers and other industries are placing an enormous demand on the already-taxed electric grid, and homes are at greater risk during power outages. We see builders switching to propane as consumers seek a reliable source of heat and backup power. We are working with our sales teams to educate consumers and builders to ensure generators are sized correctly for homes, and how options like tankless water heaters play in their favor.



How would you describe GROWMARK's mission and core values?

GROWMARK's mission is to improve the long-term profitability of its member-owners by helping farmers feed and fuel the world. We value integrity, quality, expertise, dependability and customer satisfaction through tailored solutions and operational efficiency.

What sets GROWMARK apart as a partner to propane marketers?

What truly differentiates GROWMARK in the propane space is the way we blend the scale and sophistication of a major energy supplier with the mindset of a long-term partner. Few can deliver the combination of reliability, strategic support and cooperative values that GROWMARK brings to the table.

How has GROWMARK helped a member company overcome a significant operational or supply-related challenge?

We can certainly point back to the 2013-2014 heating season as a challenge that was successfully navigated within our system, or the 2019 grain drying season, or even the stress this past season provided. The importance of all those



situations is that together, we all learned how to better protect our business and provide our customers with reliable supply. For example, by implementing remote tank monitors, we've reduced emergency deliveries and improved customer satisfaction. We've analyzed our bulk storage turns and added storage where needed. Our proactive approach to supply planning has ensured that our customers experienced uninterrupted service even during these challenges.

What industry trends are having the biggest impact on GROWMARK and its members today?

Some of the trends impacting our members are federal regulations, state-level electrification policies, labor challenges and general inflation affecting operational expenses. We're actively involved with the lobbying efforts of [the National Propane Gas Association] and our state/regional associations to advocate for energy choice legislation to prevent local bans and preserve consumer fuel options. We're also faced with farmer consolidation, data and AI integration into agronomic practices and decision-making, sustainability, and economic pressure from changing market dynamics.

GROWMARK teams work daily to help



members stay informed about the latest changes in these areas, provide advice and guidance, and maintain a pipeline of information flowing to ensure they are equipped with the best information for each decision they need to make.

How does GROWMARK support member companies in areas like safety, training and day-to-day operations?

Safety is one of our core values. We are centered on a 'choose safe' approach, aiming to ensure all employees return home safely every day. Our strict compliance with employee training and safety standards, and our commitment to treating safety as a moral obligation, allow our customers to feel confident that their systems are reliable and safe for their families, farms and businesses.

Many of our members practice proactive reporting. We encourage the reporting of 'good catches' and discovered issues as learning opportunities to improve safety across the system. We not only focus on the obvious propane safety training, but we also emphasize that safety is a value, not just a rule, with a goal of preventing injuries and ensuring each employee understands their critical role.

What role does technology play in your strategy, and how is it helping member companies operate more efficiently?

Technology is central to GROWMARK's strategy to help members differentiate in the ag retail marketplace and to drive success for their member-owners. We have tools our members use to improve efficiency and provide a better customer experience. One of the biggest advantages

comes from data. GROWMARK has invested heavily in systems that give marketers clearer visibility into supply, demand and market conditions. Whether it's real-time inventory monitoring, forecasting tools or digital platforms that streamline ordering and logistics, we're helping members make decisions based on insight rather than instinct.

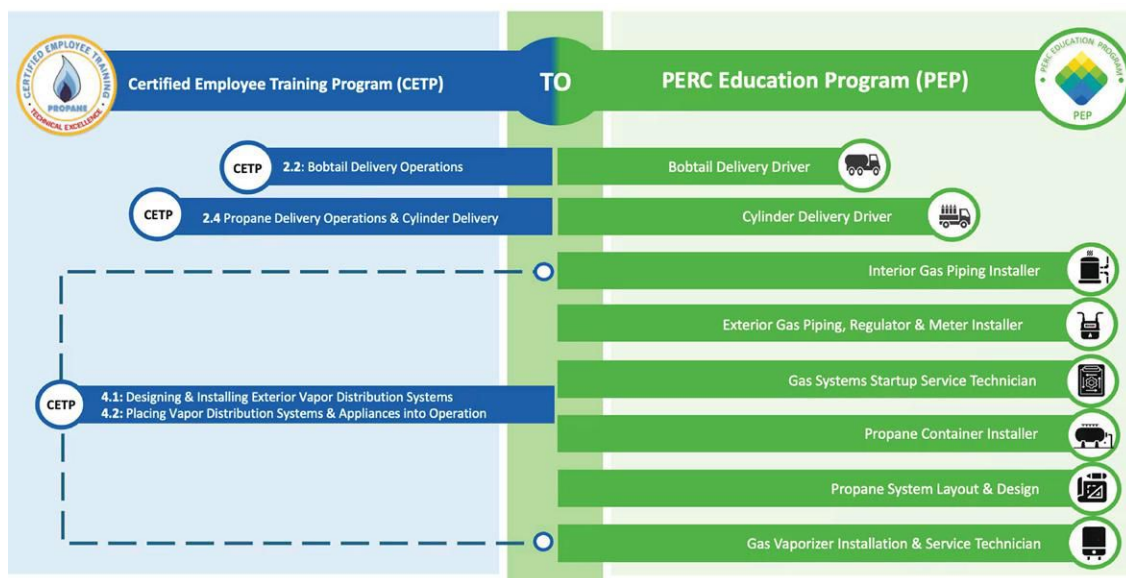
That leads to better planning, fewer emergency deliveries and more efficient use of assets.

We also support member companies with tools that improve routing, customer communication and back office efficiency. From tank-monitoring solutions to automated delivery scheduling and online account access, these technologies help marketers reduce miles driven, optimize labor and deliver a better customer experience.

How is GROWMARK positioning its members for long-term success in a changing energy landscape?

At the core, our commitment to our customers and members is supply security. GROWMARK has invested in a robust, diversified supply network including pipelines, rail terminals, storage assets and long-standing producer relationships. Through these investments, we're able to give marketers confidence even in the most volatile market conditions. When winter demand spikes or infrastructure disruptions hit, our partners know they have a supplier behind them that plans ahead, communicates clearly and prioritizes their needs. ▀

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PEP's flexible learning paths (Image courtesy of PERC)

FROM CETP TO PEP: NAVIGATING THE NEW ERA OF PROPANE TRAINING

Everything you need to know about the
PERC Education Program

BY ERIC KUSTER

The employee education and compliance landscape has evolved rapidly in recent years, along with expectations for training, safety and workforce development. The Propane Education & Research Council (PERC) recognized the need to pivot from a one-size-fits-all approach to better serve the training and development needs of industry professionals — one that is customizable, concise, modern and designed to meet educational and compliance demands while helping streamline training for propane marketers and their teams.

Building on the legacy of the Certified Employee Training Program (CETP), the new PERC Education Program (PEP) modernizes propane industry

training for today's workforce. PERC is accredited by the International Association of Continuing Education and Training as a curriculum provider using years of safety team expertise, subject matter expert review and direct trainee feedback, ensuring high-quality, modern and effective education. As the industry transitions, users can still access their earned CETP certifications in The Learning Center, but all future professional development will now take place within the PEP framework.

PEP VS. CETP: KEY DIFFERENCES & BENEFITS

It is important to know what exactly distinguishes PEP from its predecessor,

CETP, to fully understand and effectively communicate its value to industry professionals:

- **Role-based** vs. one-size-fits-all: With PEP, employees only need to complete the training modules necessary to safely perform their specific job, whereas CETP required professionals to be tested on the entire curriculum even if they were not required to perform all the job tasks as part of their job.
- **Modular learning** vs. entire curriculum: PEP is significantly more digestible, with smaller modules that have the dual benefit of improving knowledge retention and increasing course completion rates.
- **Flexible customization** vs. fixed learning paths: PEP emphasizes flexibility and customization; learning paths can be adjusted to meet a

company's or an employee's needs, whereas CETP had stricter guardrails and timelines.

- **Expanded training options** vs. limited specialization: PEP offers an array of additional electives and advanced programs to deepen expertise, providing employers options for just-in-time training, refresher training, on-the-job training (OJT) or specialized programs that blend work with experiential learning or virtual reality-simulated exercises.
- **Continuous assessment** vs. final exams: CETP certification did not require any training; it relied on a comprehensive exam and skill evaluation to achieve certification. PEP is all about delivery and comprehension of targeted and effective training, using module-based assignments with continuous progress tracking, knowledge checks and quizzes throughout, and leveraging on-the-job training to ensure learners understand the material.
- **Certification** vs. transcript: CETP provided a certificate based on a prescribed job function. PEP tracks training as it is being done with each job function listed so you can demonstrate training compliance through a comprehensive transcript available electronically through The Learning Center anytime you need it.

OPTIMIZING THE TRANSITION: HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF PEP

Shifting to a new training framework can feel like a heavy lift, but it's also an opportunity to audit and improve your internal development processes.

To help you hit the ground running, here are several strategic tips for implementing PEP effectively within your organization.

- **Take advantage of PEP's customization:** Design training paths around real job roles in your organization, adding or removing modules to match specific responsibilities. This targeted approach avoids "training fatigue" by cutting out irrelevant material, ensuring your team focuses only on what is necessary for safe, effective

performance while significantly fast-tracking their time to the field.

- **Use multiple training methods:** All PEP content is available in eLearning or instructor-led formats (PowerPoints, student guides and instructor notes). You can use either of these methods or use "blended learning," which combines both online and instructor-led formats to improve the learner experience, increase retention and improve comprehension.
- **Monitor, adapt and repeat:** Use PEP's continuous progress tracking to keep an eye on where employees excel and where they struggle. Gather feedback from both trainees and supervisors to refine these learning paths over time. Because PEP is versatile, you can treat your training as a living process, adjusting settings and requirements with each iteration to better optimize your results.
- **Career pathing:** You can use PEP training programs to map an employee's professional growth by aligning skill development with organizational goals. By leveraging PEP's targeted training to build required skills gradually, you can provide structured growth opportunities, resulting in higher employee retention, increased engagement and improved organizational agility.
- **Stay informed:** The propane industry and its regulatory requirements are always moving. Stay ahead of the curve by keeping up with curriculum enhancements and industry updates. A simple way to stay current is to sign up for PERC's free newsletter, "Safety Matters," which delivers the latest PEP news and safety stories directly to your inbox.
- **Lean on PERC support:** You don't have to manage this transition in a vacuum. PERC provides a robust suite of tools, step-by-step guidance and expert support to help you map out your new curriculum. Reach out to the PERC team to resolve technical questions or get advice on best practices for your specific operation size.

ADDITIONAL PEP RESOURCES

As you prepare to introduce PEP to your workflows, consult the following materials on propane.com/perc-education-program:

- **PEP Webinar:** A free, downloadable presentation for your company or other interested parties on the switch to PEP, from timing to training changes.
- **PEP FAQs:** A one-pager delving into frequently asked questions, from "When does the transition to PEP take place?" to "Where do I upload my OJT worksheets?"
- **Becoming a PEP-Recognized Instructor:** A brochure that walks through the road to PEP-Recognized Instructor certification.
- **Becoming a PEP-Recognized Field Trainer:** A brochure compiled of the advantages and steps to becoming a field trainer with OJT training.

The shift from CETP to PEP is a strategic leap toward a more flexible, efficient and role-relevant workforce. By prioritizing individualized learning over a one-size-fits-all approach, PEP allows marketers to focus training exactly where it's needed, accelerating the journey from a new hire's first day to their first field assignment. Embracing this versatile new standard is an opportunity to rethink your business's growth — building a safer, more capable team that is ready to meet the demands of a modern propane landscape. 📌

Eric Kuster joined the Propane Education & Research Council as the vice president of safety, education and compliance in August 2019. In this role, Kuster has overall responsibility for PERC's safety, training and compliance programs, including PEP, and works with industry stakeholders on several regulatory organizations, including the NFPA 58 technical committee and the World Liquid Gas Association Core Safety Group. Contact him at eric.kuster@propane.com.



THE RESIGNATION GUT PUNCH: HIRE FAST WITHOUT HIRING WRONG

Build your company culture to attract the right candidates before a role even opens

BY BETH GASSER



A resignation letter can feel like a gut punch, especially when it comes from the person who has quietly kept the wheels turning for years. When an employee gives notice, how quickly can you move from grieving the loss to filling the role?

If it is a long-term teammate who you have trusted for years, who helped build your processes and who held a ton of company knowledge, it feels personal.

The opposite is true when someone was not a great fit from the start. It can

feel like a relief. They didn't hold the same values, adhere to your standards of customer service or value loyalty the way the rest of your team does.

Yes, you will update your standard operating procedures or hurriedly create them. But whether it's a sad loss or good riddance, in those first few days, your focus should be on filling the role to keep the business going and also to ease the burden and stress on your remaining team.

DON'T SCRAMBLE, BE READY

A hard truth: When a role suddenly opens up, your team feels pressure. If you run ads right away and don't see results, the next instinct is often to increase spend or scrutinize the ad. Most of the time, the real issue is what happens after someone sees it. Are you clearly selling the position and your company? Are your culture and values coming through? Do you have an online hiring process, and does it make it easy to apply?

EXIT



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That's why this work shouldn't start when someone resigns. All year long, you need to give attention to how you're marketing your company and how your application process feels to candidates. The top talent you want to hire is evaluating you as much as you're evaluating them, and they care about the experience you create. Hiring decisions affect someone's life and future, so help them see themselves working for you and give them a reason to believe in the

choice. If your goal is to attract great candidates, your process has to reflect it.

LET YOUR CULTURE DO THE RECRUITING

Why would someone want to work for your company? Even if you're in human resources, you're in sales and marketing. You are selling the position you need to hire. But if the effort you put into making it appealing doesn't adequately convey the incredible propane business and family atmosphere you've built, then you're missing out on candidates.

In a time when anyone can work anywhere, you need to stand out. You need a dynamite job description that clearly shows you put effort and thought into painting a clear picture of what the position entails.

Not only do candidates want honesty, clarity and descriptive details to help them decide whether to apply, but they also value a number of other factors. Aspects like safety, your willingness to listen to their ideas and advancement opportunities can strongly attract growth-minded individuals.

CULTURE ATTRACTS THE RIGHT FIT

You don't need to have a pool table in the garage or an oversized office cat to be cool. But if you do have unique aspects to your company culture that help define what it's like to work there, you need to devote space on your website, social media and employment materials to share what it's like to be a member of your team.

Haley Pitcock shares what it's like to be an employee of Farmers Energy Propane Plus in Kentucky: "Whether it's helping someone face-to-face or a technician calling afterward just to make sure everything is still working, being part of a team that genuinely cares and makes time for people makes me proud to be here."

If your culture is reserved, professional and a bit old school, it will appeal to someone looking for that kind of thing. If your culture is fast-paced, technology-driven and a bit quirky, it will appeal to

The top talent you want to hire is evaluating you as much as you're evaluating them.

the right people. Flexibility in scheduling, training, community involvement and a family-friendly environment are just a few of the things that should be highlighted.

Candidates want to know if they are a good fit with your mission, vision and values. So, share those aspects of your company publicly; don't hide them in an untouched folder on your computer. And for heaven's sake, make sure they hear from your long-standing employees through quotes, videos, stories and more.

Make it clear what your company stands for and the problems you solve for others. For candidates who value making a difference and want their work to matter, your attention to this will be well worth the time you spend. Carefully outline opportunities to learn, grow and advance.

So, what are you waiting for? You need to sell the heck out of the position and your company culture. Do it so well that when the time comes, candidates will be the ones scrambling to apply. 📌

Beth Gasser is a marketing strategist, content writer and small business owner of four businesses with 30 years of marketing experience. She is a StoryBrand-certified coach who specializes in helping businesses clarify their message so customers and prospects listen. Gasser is a fierce champion of the undeniable kick-assery of small, rural propane businesses that want to grow. Visit vividpropanemarketing.com.





NAVIGATING INSURANCE RENEWALS IN THE PROPANE INDUSTRY: WHY EXPERTISE MATTERS

What you need to consider in a broker when your policy is ready to renew

BY FRANK THOMPSON

It happens like clockwork every year: Your insurance policy comes up for renewal. Along with it comes a wave of phone calls from agents eager to quote your commercial insurance. After enough interruptions, it's easy to become frustrated or simply tune them out. But this moment in the renewal cycle is more important than it may seem. It's your opportunity to distinguish between agents who truly understand the propane industry and those casting a wide net for any business they can quote.

The reality is that only a limited number of independent insurance agencies and professionals specialize in propane. Fewer still are appointed with carriers willing to underwrite propane marketers. Insuring propane operations is a niche segment, shaped by strict safety standards, regulatory oversight and the inherent risks of handling hazardous materials. Meanwhile, the broader insurance marketplace has consolidated. Large brokerage firms have acquired many independent agencies,

creating “one-stop shops” that offer everything from employee benefits to personal lines, workers’ compensation and commercial liability. While these firms bring scale, they often lack deep specialization in industries like propane.

This lack of focus becomes evident when evaluating which brokers actively participate in and support organizations like the National Propane Gas Association. A closer look reveals that only a handful of insurance providers and brokers are truly engaged in the propane sector — and even fewer have the expertise to properly underwrite a hazmat-driven business.

One of the most common red flags during renewal season is the question: “If I can beat your current price, can I earn your business?” While competitive pricing is important, this approach prioritizes cost over coverage. For propane marketers, inadequate coverage can carry significant operational and financial risk. Another warning sign is the agent who immediately requests your current policies or prior quotes. This shortcut often replaces a thorough evaluation of your operations.



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Equally important is recognizing that simply replicating last year's coverage is rarely sufficient. Property values may have increased, fleets may have changed, driver rosters may be different and gallon volumes may have shifted. A proper renewal should reflect the current state of your business — not a recycled snapshot from the past.

The application process itself is another critical component. While often time-consuming, these forms provide underwriters with essential information regarding your operations, risk profile and loss history. Accuracy is vital. Misstatements or omissions can lead to denied claims or coverage disputes. In many cases, applications and five-year loss runs are the primary tools underwriters rely on when evaluating a propane account.

When proposals are presented, they should be comprehensive and transparent. A professional insurance quote will clearly identify the carriers involved, outline all coverages — such as property, general liability, auto, workers' compensation, umbrella, employment practices liability and cyber — and specify applicable deductibles. Anything less should raise questions.

Finally, consider the value of personal connection. In an increasingly digital world, it's easy for business relationships to become transactional. But propane operations are complex, and they benefit from hands-on understanding. The most effective insurance partners are those who take the time to visit your facilities, understand your processes and build relationships with your team.

Insurance for propane marketers isn't just about policies — it's about partnership. Choosing an agent with specialized knowledge, industry involvement and a commitment to service can make all the difference when it matters most. If you have to teach your insurance agent about propane, you're with the wrong agent. 📌

Even more concerning is the request to sign a Broker of Record letter. By doing so, you effectively transfer control of your insurance program to that agent — often without a full understanding of their qualifications or approach. In many cases, this action can disrupt your existing agent relationship and complicate the renewal process.

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



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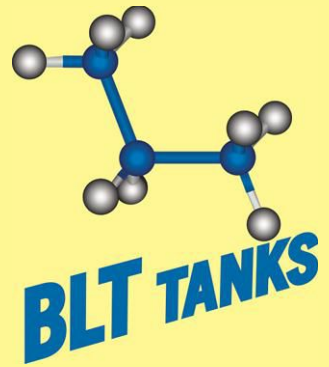
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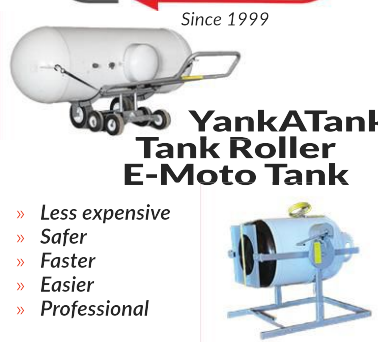
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Lauren Clark

President & CEO
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Describe your current role at your company.

As the president and CEO of Bergquist, my role is to lead our team toward our company vision and support the development of our leadership team.

How did you get your start in the propane industry?

I've been in the propane industry for a long time. I started as a propane industry kid, going to state and national meetings with my parents (and grandparents) and hearing the propane talk around the dinner table. In college, I joined my parents at several Midwest Propane Gas Association meetings in Indianapolis and then at the [NPGA Southeastern] Expo while I lived in Georgia. While I was working for a third-party logistics company in late 2008, my dad asked me to join the Bergquist team.

If you could change something in the industry, what would you change?

I would change the classification of propane as a fossil fuel. Propane is a clean, efficient and highly practical energy solution, and we should be positioning it that way. If we shift the narrative and increase adoption, we have a real opportunity to make a meaningful impact for both our industry and the environment.

What's the most important lesson you have learned from a mentor/manager?

The most important lesson I learned from a mentor is how to hear all the voices in a room. For me that often means being quiet. When leaders speak first, it can limit honest input. It also means observing, noticing who is talking and who else is quiet and asking questions that encourage everyone to participate. I focus on creating space for others, actively drawing out quieter voices and making sure every perspective is understood before aligning the team.

What do you think would surprise someone about the job you do? I think it would surprise people to know how little day-to-day task work I do. In the years since becoming the president and CEO, I have shifted my role to strategic

planning, thinking and supporting my team. The work is less about doing and more about creating clarity, alignment and momentum across the organization.

What required the most training for your role?

Developing a long-term, strategic mindset required the most training. Early on, it was easy to focus on day-to-day operations, but over time I've had to learn to step back, think ahead and make decisions that position the company for the future.

What was your first job?

Babysitting was my first job. I have always loved kids. When I was working on my first resume and preparing for interviews, I realized how much of the skills I gained from babysitting were transferrable to any job. It built confidence, accountability and a strong work ethic. I also learned early on the value of going beyond expectations — finding ways to make things easier for others without being asked.

What's the most important core value an employee/colleague can have?

Integrity! Doing the right thing, even when it's difficult, even when no one is watching.

What are you reading?

I just reread 'The Let Them Theory' and I am currently reading 'The AI Driven Leader' and 'The Oz Principal.'

What are some of your hobbies?

My hobbies are hosting casual hangouts as often as possible, lake time, crocheting, golfing and listening to audiobooks while cooking, cleaning and running my kids to all of their activities.

Which historical figure would you most like to meet?

I would choose Susan B. Anthony. I've always been inspired by her ability to bring people together to challenge the status quo and create lasting change, even in the face of significant resistance. 🍷



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