

Underground Propane Tank Ownership: Know Your Responsibilities

Customers who own their tanks are responsible for the upkeep and protection of the container.

If you currently own your underground propane tank or are considering purchasing an underground tank, you should be aware of your responsibilities regarding the safe operation and maintenance of your tank.

By understanding your role in keeping your propane tank operating safely and efficiently, you can keep your family secure and enjoy all the benefits that propane delivers.

GENERAL MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS

A well-maintained tank will last for many years. It is important that you know how your tank and delivery system work, what your responsibilities are, and what to do in the event of a safety-related emergency.

Customers who own their tanks are responsible for upkeep and protection of the tank. It is also your responsibility to comply with all local, state, and national code requirements.

Propane tank installation, maintenance, and repair should be performed only by a qualified service technician. If you own your tank, you are responsible for finding a qualified service technician to service your tank. It is a good idea to identify and talk to qualified service technicians — before a problem occurs — to make sure they are capable of servicing your tank in a timely and safe manner.

Many propane suppliers provide preventive maintenance and repair services. Ask a propane supplier for more information on these programs.

PROTECTING YOUR CONTAINER

Locating and protecting tanks and domes
Underground propane tanks have distance and placement requirements. For example, they must be installed at least 10 feet from a building or line of an adjoining property. Additionally, underground propane tanks should be protected if vehicular traffic is nearby.

If a vehicle strikes or runs over the dome of an underground tank, it can cause a gas leak that could result in serious personal injury if ignited.

You are responsible for making sure that your underground tank is placed in an area that is not subject to vehicular traffic. Underground tanks should be placed well away (at least 10 feet) from any road, street, driveway, or parking lot, at a safe enough distance that vehicles traveling in these areas will not strike or run over the underground tank dome.

If an underground tank must be installed within 10 feet of vehicular traffic, crash-resistant physical protection, such as bollards, fences, or barriers, must be installed to protect the exposed dome of the tank. In addition, there are special depth requirements for the underground portion of a tank that is installed in or near any area of vehicular traffic.

In the event of any construction, excavation, snow removal, or landscaping activity that is conducted in the area of an underground tank, you are responsible for advising all contractors





and workers who are involved in such work of the exact location of the underground propane tank and the dome of the tank so that vehicle and equipment impact may be avoided. In addition, keep gasoline-powered garden equipment, such as riding lawnmowers and garden tractors, away from the dome of your underground tank.

Underground tank installations are most common during new home construction. Make sure to ask your propane supplier or underground tank installer about tank location and special requirements before you begin the excavation process.

Protecting against corrosion and leaks

Regulations in many states require that underground propane tanks installed after January 1, 2011, must have a cathodic protection system to help prevent corrosion of the tank. Over time, corrosion can create pits or holes in the tank and lines. Without proper protection, leaks can occur, resulting in personal injuries and property damage.

The purpose of cathodic protection is to provide an increased level of corrosion protection for the underground tank. After a cathodic protection system has been installed, testing must be performed according to a specified schedule, and documentation must be kept by the owner. Customers who own their tanks are responsible for meeting testing requirements and maintaining documentation.

In many states, if your tank was installed after January 1, 2011, the tank must be tested according to the following schedule:

- Within six months of installation
- 12-18 months after the initial test
- At least every 3 years after the second successful test.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND INFORMATION

For more information on the rules, responsibilities, and maintenance requirements of propane container ownership described in this flyer, please contact your local propane supplier.

If you need assistance in determining when you will need to recertify your DOT stationary cylinder, contact a propane supplier, the DOT, or the NFPA.

Contact the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), a propane supplier, or the container manufacturer for more information on the proper anchoring of a propane container in areas prone to flooding.

Protecting your underground tank against flooding

In areas prone to flooding, national regulations require that underground propane tanks are anchored securely to avoid potentially dangerous situations. You must have your underground tank properly anchored if you live in or near a flood plain, or in an area where coastal flooding may occur.

Protecting your underground tank against extreme weather

Make sure your tank and propane system are properly secured for all types of extreme weather that may occur in your area. It is your responsibility to have your tank and system repaired and inspected by a qualified service technician if damaged from extreme weather such as hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, earthquakes, and high winds.

THE PROPANE EDUCATION & RESEARCH COUNCIL was authorized by the U.S. Congress with the passage of Public Law 104-284, the Propane Education and Research Act (PERA), signed into law on October 11, 1996. The mission of the Propane Education & Research Council is to promote the safe, efficient use of odorized propane gas as a preferred energy source.

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YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

Understand all warnings and labels Make sure you understand and follow all warnings and labels on your tank and propane system. This will help to ensure your system operates safely and efficiently.

Understand the terms and conditions of the tank warranty Some manufacturers will extend their warranty only to the original purchaser of the tank. If you purchase a tank from a dealer or other party, the warranty will be voided. Make sure you understand the terms and conditions of the warranty before you decide to purchase a tank.

Check with your homeowner's insurance provider

Some insurers may have special conditions or requirements specific to tank ownership. It is a good idea to contact your homeowner's insurance provider, inform them that you own your tank, and confirm that you have insurance coverage in the event of a problem.

If you choose to own, it's up to you to take care of your tank You assume many responsibilities when you own a propane tank. The proper installation, maintenance, and care of your underground propane tank can provide you with many years of safe and comfortable service. Remember, only you can keep your propane tank operating smoothly and, more important, keep you and your family safe. The best way to do this is to understand the responsibilities of underground tank ownership.