

# *Safety Tip of the Month: August*

## **WANDERING WISELY**

### **PROPANE CAMPING EQUIPMENT SAFETY TIPS**

During this year's camping season, millions of nature lovers will rely on propane-fueled camp heaters, lanterns and stoves for their camping trips. Here are some outdoor equipment safety tips, courtesy of the National Propane Gas Association (NPGA), to help campers understand how to use their recreational propane appliances safely.

#### **Overall Tips**

Make sure that your shelter or camper is adequately ventilated at all times. Never leave the heater, stove or lamp burning overnight or unattended.

Check your propane-fueled camping appliances periodically to ensure they are functioning properly. Carefully inspect them at home before taking them on a trip. Never use a flame to check for leaks; instead, apply soapy water on each of the connections, turn on the gas and watch for telltale bubbles. Also, be alert for the 'rotten egg' odor of propane, which may also indicate a leak.

If you smell the familiar 'rotten egg' odor of propane, follow these steps: (1) do not light matches or use any electrical equipment; (2) exit your camper or tent immediately; (3) if there is an outside tank, turn off the gas valve; (4) call your propane supplier or fire department from a phone near your campsite.

Use only approved appliances and look for a label from a testing laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories, before buying. Always thoroughly read and follow the manufacturer's directions. Never use a worn or damaged appliance.

Do not store propane cylinders inside hot vehicles or where temperatures might rise above 120 degrees Fahrenheit. Cylinders should be stored, moved and used in an upright position unless otherwise indicated on the cylinder. Both cylinders and appliances should be kept out of the reach of children at all times.

#### **Camp Stove Tips**

Never use your propane stove in an enclosed area. It should be located in an open, well-ventilated area away from shrubs or dry wood. If such an area is not available, clear one by hand. Keep the stove away from your tent, sleeping bags and camper.

Secure the stove on a level, nonflammable surface. Use a stove base when cooking on snow or uneven ground. Ceramic tile or old license plates make great bases. Visible markers should be put up to alert fellow campers to stoves that are small and low to the ground.

Before connecting the stove to the propane cylinder, make sure that the stove valve is set at 'OFF.' Inspect and check connections carefully for dirt or damage prior to lighting. To clean, use a damp, warm, soapy paper towel or sponge. Use the 'bubble test' mentioned earlier to check the connections. Never immerse the stove in water.

If ignition does not occur immediately, turn off the gas, wait for it to clear and try again. When lighting, make sure you keep your hands and fingers to the side of the burner and clothing away from the flame.

Never leave a hot stove unattended, and always turn it off before moving it. Disconnect the fuel cylinder when repacking, storing or transporting the camp stove. Cover and store the stove in a clean, dry place.

### Lamp and Lantern Tips

Keep dirt and foreign particles out of the lantern valve, and blow the valve clean before connecting the cylinder to the lantern. Check the cylinder, valve connections and mantle (the part shielding the flame) before each use.

Never operate without a mantle or with a damaged mantle that has visible holes or cracks. Avoid mantle 'overburn,' which can shorten the life of the mantle and damage your lantern.

Leave plenty of clearance between your propane lamp or lantern and any combustible materials. Follow the manufacturer's recommendations for space clearance. Select a level surface on which to place the lamp or lantern.

A lantern is not a space heater. Use it only as a light source. Always detach the propane cylinder before transporting a lantern.

### Camp Heater Tips

Only use propane gas heaters that have been tested and labeled by a recognized agency. Leave clearance around and above the unit. The recommended distances are six to twelve inches on the sides, one to four feet above, and at least three feet in front. Your propane heater should only be used for heating, not for cooking food or drying clothes.

Select the right type of heater for your needs. A direct-vent heater uses outside air to support combustion in its sealed combustion chamber and vents exhaust back outside. Use this type of heater in your tent or RV and keep the outside vent free of debris. A vent-free heater uses inside air to support combustion and vents directly into the room. Vent-free heaters should only be used in accordance with the manufacturer's installation instructions.

Proper use of your camping equipment will ensure you and your family many years of enjoyment of the great outdoors.

