

## *Safety Tip of the Month: January*

### **NO ELECTRICITY? NO PROBLEM! NPGA Offers Power Outage Solutions for Homeowners**

It's a homeowner's worst nightmare: a blizzard makes travel impossible, power lines are down due to ice and snow, and there is no way to heat your home. During the winter, freezing temperatures and heavy snowfalls may result in electrical blackouts that leave hundreds or thousands of homeowners in the cold.

This year, with record snowfall and cold temperatures blanketing much of the country, the National Propane Gas Association (NPGA) recommends that homeowners dependent on electricity for heating and lighting learn about 'stormproofing' appliances.

#### **Propane Generators-A Foolproof Solution**

A propane-powered backup generator automatically turns on when the normal flow of electricity is interrupted. A propane generator provides temporary power to all predesignated equipment, such as a furnace, sump pump or even lights. How long a generator will run depends on its size, the amount of propane in the tank and the number of appliances being fueled. According to Jeff Stangler, director of marketing for Generac (a manufacturer of propane-powered backup generators), 45 gallons of propane will keep an eight-kilowatt generator running at full load for up to 24 hours. That is enough electricity to run a gas furnace, fan, space heater, sump pump, water heater, microwave oven and a color TV.

#### **Propane Room Heaters-A Small-Scale Solution**

A propane room heater is an ideal solution for homeowners who want to ensure that at least one room is always warm, regardless of what happens to electric power lines. Room heaters come in many shapes and sizes, ranging from a simple wall-mounted unit to a fireplace with realistic logs, to a 65,000 Btu unit capable of heating a small house. Some room heaters rely on electricity to power their blowers, to help distribute heat evenly throughout the room. During a power outage these heaters will still emit heat, but only near the unit.

Consumers should determine which type of room heater is best for their needs—a direct-vent or an unvented heater. A direct-vent propane room heater uses outside air to support combustion in its sealed combustion chamber. It does not require a chimney but merely a pair of concentric gas pipes from the heater to an outside wall, which handles both air intake and exhaust. An unvented space heater uses air from the inside to support combustion and circulates heated air directly into the room. An oxygen depletion sensor (ODS) on the unit monitors the oxygen levels inside the room and shuts off the heater if the oxygen content drops below a predetermined level. This type of unit operates at 99 percent efficiency but may not be available in all areas. Ask your propane supplier which type is right for your installation.

'The tremendous boom in sales of propane room and space heaters can be attributed to three things: the reliability of propane as a constant, available fuel source during harsh weather; technological advances in the safety and efficiency of the products; and recognition by many state and national fire safety authorities of those advances. As a result, authorities began permitting unvented heater installations in bedrooms and bathrooms,' said Bruce Swiecicki, NPGA's Vice President for Technical Services.

### **Propane Water Heaters, Ranges and Grills-Stormproof Standbys**

Most propane gas water heaters are unaffected by power outages and are more economical to operate than their electric counterparts. Only power vent models, installed with horizontal piping to the outside, need electricity to operate the blower.

A standing pilot ignition range will allow families to cook hot meals throughout the worst weather. A propane gas range also cooks as many as two meals with the same amount of energy it takes to cook one meal on an electric stove.

Another stormproof cooking solution is a propane gas grill. The latest upscale portable models are equipped with a wide variety of options, from side burners and rotisseries to warming racks. Propane gas grills can be used year-round, as long as they are operated and stored outside.

Preparing for 'old man winter' means looking at the alternatives available and making informed choices-before he arrives.