

Safety Tip of the Month: March

ON THE ROAD AGAIN... NPGA Prepares RV Owners for Safe Trips

According to the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA), there are approximately 9.3 million RVs in the US—one in every 10 vehicle-owning households. Of the 30 million RV enthusiasts in the country, more and more are using their RVs year-round. For those RV owners using propane gas for cooking, heating, water heating and engine fueling, the National Propane Gas Association (NPGA) offers these safety tips.

Have Your RV Inspected by a Professional.

Proper care and maintenance of your RV is the best way to keep it in good running order, save you money in the long run, and prevent a breakdown from spoiling a trip. In addition to following the maintenance schedule recommended by the manufacturer and having regularly scheduled maintenance and repairs done at an RV dealership or service center, pay particular attention to the propane system on your vehicle.

Whether you use your RV year-round or only periodically, the propane system, including all appliances, should be checked to ensure it is functioning properly.

Your propane supplier or RV dealer should inspect the regulator, valves and fittings and check for gas leaks. The dealer will also inspect the propane tank for excessive rust and dents. A seriously dented or rusted tank must be replaced immediately.

Have the RV dealer inspect the appliances, including air intake and exhaust vents. If you covered the access doors and vents to prevent insect infestation, be sure to remove the covers before using the appliance. Without proper ventilation, the gas will not burn properly and burners may not light at all.

Propane suppliers can familiarize you with the 'rotten egg' odor of propane gas as well as to procedures to follow if you detect this odor. If you or your passengers are allergy sufferers or have a poor sense of smell, you may want to consider installing a gas leak detector.

Finally, before taking an extended trip, have your propane supplier or RV dealer verify that the propane tanks can carry an adequate supply of fuel to power the heater and other appliances for the duration of the trip. Or, be sure to plan your trip carefully to map out your anticipated refueling stops.

Take Care Of Your Tank.

Paint the propane tank a bright, reflective color. Assuming the tank has passed inspection by a propane supplier or RV dealer, you can perform minor touch-ups: sand away the rust until the metal beneath is white and shiny, then prime and touch up with paint. Do not paint over the warning labels.

Always store and use the propane tank in its proper position. Arrows indicating the correct position are embossed in the metal of the tank. A horizontal tank should never be stored or used in the vertical position and vice versa.

Follow Proper Refueling Procedures.

When refueling, turn off the engine, all appliances and the electronic reigniters. All passengers should exit the RV. After refueling, turn on the gas and listen to the gas regulator. A continuous hissing sound indicates the presence of a leak. If you believe your tank has a leak, it is important to follow the warnings on the tank and contact a propane supplier immediately.

If you smell gas, whether refueling or not, (1) exit the camper/trailer and do not use any electric switches or appliances, (2) leave the door open to air out the coach, (3) shut off the propane tank and, (4) call a propane gas supplier and/or the fire department from a nearby phone.