

Keeping Your Family Safe: Wildfires

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT PROPANE SAFETY AND WILDFIRES

The purpose of this handout is to provide information you need to know about propane safety and how to keep your family safe during and after a wildfire. By taking a few simple propane-related safety precautions and discussing them with your family, you can reduce the potential for property loss, personal injury, and even death.

▶ BEFORE: BE PREPARED FOR A WILDFIRE

- Know how and where to shut off the outdoor propane supply and indoor propane appliances. For more information, contact your propane supplier.
- Clear at least a 10-foot area around your propane tank and gas grill of any debris. Remove anything that is combustible or easily ignited, including leaves, brush, any vegetation, and rags.
- Make sure the grill and all propane cylinders are at least 10 feet from any structure.
- Have an adequate supply of propane in your tank. During and after a wildfire, propane and other types of fuel may not be readily available and roads leading to your home or farm might not be accessible for delivery.
- **Make sure that you and your family know what propane smells like.** Propane has a strong, unpleasant smell like rotten eggs, a skunk's spray, or a dead animal.
- **Never** store or place a propane cylinder indoors or in an enclosed area such as a basement, garage, shed, or tent.
- It is recommended that you consider installing a carbon monoxide (CO) detector listed by Underwriters Laboratories (UL) on every level of your home. Be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions regarding installation, location, and maintenance.
- Propane gas detectors provide an additional measure of security. It is recommended that you consider installing one or more propane gas detectors listed by UL. Be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions regarding installation, location, and maintenance.
- Have a list of instructions on how to turn off electricity, propane, and water. Review suggested preparations for natural disasters such as wildfires with your propane supplier as well as other utility suppliers. Advise them of any special needs you may have.
- Create an emergency preparedness plan and review it regularly with your family in order to keep them safe during a potential disaster.

DURING: WHAT TO DO IF A WILDFIRE THREATENS YOUR SAFETY

Wildfires can spread quickly and destroy or damage homes and property, including propane tanks and appliances. In addition to the intense heat and flames of a wildfire, fallen trees and power lines can present major problems for homeowners and emergency responders. Often, they block access routes for fire trucks and other emergency vehicles.

If a wildfire threatens your safety, you may have to decide whether or not it is necessary to evacuate your home or farm. Listen to

your local authorities, or television and radio stations, for instructions on the appropriate course of action to take. Whether it is determined that you should stay or leave, you should shut off your gas.

SHUT OFF THE GAS!

Turn off the main gas supply valve on your propane tank, if it is safe to do so. To close the valve, turn it to the right (clockwise).



Turn off the gas supply valves located near individual indoor appliances. Consult your propane supplier to make sure you know where the actual valves are located and how to shut them off.

If you have a propane fireplace or log set, close any screen, door, or damper.

If your gas comes from a metered pipe system, consult your propane supplier on how to shut off the gas.

AFTER: WHAT TO DO AFTER A WILDFIRE

Use extreme caution when returning to your home or farm. If you have any doubts about your safety, leave the area immediately and have your property inspected by a qualified building inspector or structural engineer before re-entering.

When you have determined that it is safe to return, take the time to carefully evaluate the condition of all the structures on your property. If it is dark, use flashlights, not candles.

Look carefully around the entire area. Check for downed power lines; they can create major safety hazards. Inspect your gas lines and tank for damage. Immediately call your local utility company or propane supplier if any of these hazards are observed.

FOLLOW THESE GENERAL SAFETY RULES

Once it is determined that it is safe inside your home, you must still be alert to potential dangers. To help reduce the potential for injury or death, there are general safety rules that you should observe at all times:

- **Never** store or place a propane cylinder indoors or in an enclosed area such as a basement, garage, shed, or tent.
- **Never** use outdoor propane appliances indoors or in enclosed areas. This can result in CO poisoning or death. These include outdoor portable heaters, barbecue grills, and portable generators. Only use appliances indoors that are designed and approved for indoor use.
- **Never** use a gas oven or range-top burners to provide space heating.
- **Do not under any circumstances try to modify or repair valves, regulators, or other appliance parts.**
- **Never** turn on a light switch, use any power source, or inspect your household appliances while standing in water. This can result in electrocution.
- **Do** inspect chimneys, flue pipes, and vent connectors for damage, blockage, or debris.
- **Do** inspect your propane appliances for water or other damage, if it is safe to do so. If the appliances have electric components and have been exposed to water, they can create a fire hazard.

AT ANY TIME: IF YOU SMELL GAS INSIDE OR OUTSIDE OF YOUR HOME

No flames or sparks! Immediately put out all smoking materials and other open flames. Do not operate lights, appliances, telephones, or cell phones. Flames or sparks from these sources can trigger an explosion or a fire.



Leave the area immediately! Get everyone out of the building or area where you suspect gas is leaking.



Shut off the gas. Turn off the main gas supply valve on your propane tank, if it is safe to do so. To close the valve, turn it to the right (clockwise).



Report the leak. From a neighbor's home or other building away from the gas leak, call your propane supplier right away. If you can't reach your propane supplier, call 911 or your local fire department.



Do not return to the building or area until your propane supplier determines that it is safe to do so.



Get your system checked.

Before you attempt to use any of your propane appliances, your propane supplier or a qualified service technician must check your entire system to ensure that it is leak free.



IF YOU SUSPECT ANY OF YOUR PROPANE APPLIANCES, EQUIPMENT, OR VEHICLES HAVE BEEN UNDER WATER OR THEY HAVE BEEN DAMAGED, OR YOU HAVE TURNED OFF YOUR GAS SUPPLY:

Do schedule a time for a qualified service technician to perform a complete inspection of your propane system. The technician can also perform a leak test on the system and re-light your pilot lights.

Do Not use or operate appliances, equipment, or vehicles, or turn on the gas supply, until your system has been inspected by a qualified service technician.