

Propane and Your Recreational Vehicle

A guide to help safely maintain
and use propane in RVs



Millions of people enjoy the freedom, flexibility, and comforts of recreational vehicle travel. But, along with their unique privileges, RVs come with unique maintenance needs that can become complex when RVs are rented, resold, rebuilt, or used by many parties. Ultimately you are your best protection. Whether you're a long-time owner or first-time traveler, it's important to know about your RV's propane system. Take a few minutes to read this brochure and learn how to manage it safely.



The RV Propane System

Your propane system (liquefied petroleum gas or LP gas system) is a very important part of your RV. It can provide heat and hot water, power your stove and refrigerator, and fuel barbecue grills or other small appliances. There are two basic types of propane containers and systems:

- Portable cylinders
- Permanently installed tanks

Travel trailers, folding camping trailers, and fifth-wheel units typically use one or two portable cylinders that are positioned upright and mounted to the outside front or back, or inside a recessed compartment or housing of the RV. Motor homes typically use a single, permanently installed tank, positioned horizontally and located underneath the chassis. Regardless of container type, all refilling, repair, or replacement must be done by a trained service technician.

RV Modifications

Over the lifetime of an RV, modifications and enhancements to the propane system may have been made by the current or previous owners. Make sure you are aware of these enhancements and modifications. Talk to a trained service technician to find out if any special safety or maintenance instructions are required.

While you may do touch-ups to your RV from time to time, do not paint propane containers, valves, or mounting hardware. This may mask important service issues, affect valves, or result in system failure.

- **Make sure your system is inspected at least annually by a trained service technician. Their extensive training enables them to detect potential hazards and address them properly.**
- **Do not connect your propane piping to another gas source or attempt to repair any propane-related component yourself.**

Before You Go

Before heading out on the road, you'll want to follow these quick tips:

- Inspect propane cylinders and hold-down brackets for signs of rust, corrosion, fatigue, or wear. For permanently installed tanks, check the brackets and mounting hardware, as well. Have a trained service technician check out any issues.
- If you are bringing additional propane cylinders, make sure they are stored securely, upright, and in a well-ventilated area. Never store or transport any propane container inside your RV.
- Inspect connections leading to your propane appliances for frays, kinks, or damage.
- Make sure your RV has operational propane, carbon monoxide, and smoke detectors as required by code. You should also have at least one fire extinguisher (Class 5-B:C for trailers; Class 10-B:C for motor homes).
- If you need to replace or install a new detector, be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions regarding installation, location, and maintenance. Make sure the detectors are approved for use in RVs.
- Exit the RV immediately if any of these detectors go off. If the propane detector goes off, follow all instructions in the "If You Smell Gas" section.

It's a good idea to review your RV owner's manual and appliance manuals before you go, and follow their instructions. If you do not have copies, contact your RV manufacturer or dealer. If you have received any recall notices on appliances—or anything in your RV—have your vehicle serviced right away.

Carbon Monoxide and Your Safety

You can't taste or smell carbon monoxide, but it is a dangerous gas. High levels of carbon monoxide can cause sickness or, in extreme cases, death. High levels can come from appliances that are not operating correctly or properly vented.

To reduce the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning, have a trained service technician check your propane system annually. Also, frequently check exterior appliance vents and clear any debris, insect nests, or other items that may restrict venting.

Never use portable heaters or other appliances in your RV unless they are approved for indoor use and specifically for use in RVs. Follow manufacturer instructions regarding operation and ventilation requirements.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include headache, dizziness, nausea, fatigue, and shortness of breath. If you suspect carbon monoxide is present, get everyone out of the RV and call 911 or the local fire department.

On the Road

Most RV refrigerators can keep food and beverages cold during several hours of travel without a power source. For your safety, it is recommended that the propane supply be turned off at the tank while driving.

Other safety tips while traveling:

- Shut off propane supply valves, pilot lights, ignitors, and appliances, and have everybody exit the vehicle during refueling.
- Extinguish all smoking materials any time you are near tanks, filling stations, or other equipment where gasoline or propane may be present.
- Turn off propane supply valves before entering tunnels or enclosed areas. Be sure to follow any postings around restricted areas, such as military bases.



At Campgrounds/Destinations

Propane is a great resource to cook food, cool beverages, or provide warmth/power at rest stops and campgrounds. Keep in mind some key safety considerations:

- Open a window or roof vent and turn on your exhaust fan when using your stove for cooking.
- Do not use your stove for space heat, or any appliances for means other than their intended use.
- Portable, fuel-burning equipment including wood, charcoal, and propane grills should never be used inside the RV or near the entryway. This can cause fires and/or carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Keep your vehicle a safe distance away from any heat source, such as grills or fire pits. Keep propane tanks and cylinders at least 10 feet away from heat sources.

Winterizing/Storage

When storing your vehicle, turn off all propane supply valves and appliances and keep vents open. If you store your vehicle in an enclosed area, remove all portable cylinders and store them securely in an upright position, in a well-ventilated area. Never store a cylinder indoors or in an enclosed area such as a basement, garage, or shed. Make sure you have a trained service technician inspect your entire propane system before using your RV.

→ If you're in an area where your RV is exposed to extreme temperature changes or inclement weather such as hail, sand storms, or high winds, consider having more frequent inspections, by a trained service technician.

Have Fun and Be Safe

Whether you're on your first trip or a long-time enthusiast, RVs offer an exciting way to travel. Your propane system is essential to your comfort and enjoyment.

Please keep this brochure in an easily accessible location in your RV. Share this information with your family and traveling companions to help keep everyone safe and to reduce the risk of accidents.

Important Contacts

Service Technician _____

RV Dealer _____

RV Manufacturer _____

If You Smell Gas



1. Immediately put out all smoking materials, pilot lights, and other open flames. Do not operate lights, appliances, or cell phones. Flames or sparks from these sources can trigger an explosion or a fire.



2. Get everybody out of the RV immediately.



3. If you are able to, safely turn off the gas supply valve on your cylinder or container.



4. Immediately leave the area and call 911 or the local fire department.



5. Before you re-enter the RV, or restart or use any of your propane appliances, have a trained service technician inspect your entire system.





IMPORTANT PROPANE SAFETY INFORMATION FOR YOUR RV

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