



# KEEPING YOUR FAMILY SAFE: WINTER STORMS



## IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT PROPANE SAFETY AND WINTER STORMS

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 winter storm. 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 WINTER STORM

- Make sure your propane tank, whether it is located above or below the ground, is marked properly by a flag, pole, or stake that is higher than the average snow-cover depth for your location. This will increase the odds of it being seen by someone such as a snowplow operator, reducing the chances for a potentially fatal accident.
- Have an adequate supply of propane in your tank. During and after a winter storm, roads leading to your home or farm might not be accessible for delivery. It is recommended that you establish a regular delivery schedule with your propane supplier.
- Know how and where to shut off the outdoor propane supply and indoor propane appliances. For more information, contact your propane supplier.
- **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 winter storms 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 WHEN A WINTER STORM APPROACHES

If a winter storm is predicted, listen to your local authorities, or television and radio stations, for instructions on the appropriate course of action to take. Although it is recommended to always have an adequate supply of propane in your tank, it is especially important during the winter months because in the event of a storm, roads leading to your home or farm might not be accessible for additional delivery.

Snow and ice can create serious problems for your home's propane system by freezing and cracking pipes, regulators, valves, or other types of propane equipment.

- Make sure to clear snow and ice away from all outdoor vents, chimneys, and flues, thereby reducing the potential for CO poisoning. Whenever possible, use a broom instead of a shovel in order to not damage your propane system components.
- Clear snow and ice from around your propane tank. If the pipes freeze and crack, gas can pool in the snow, causing it to become an ignition source, creating a potentially dangerous situation.

## ▶ AFTER

### WHAT TO DO AFTER A WINTER STORM

After a winter storm, use caution in the area surrounding 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. 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. High winds or falling ice can move, shift, or damage gas lines and tanks. Immediately call your local utility company or propane supplier if any of these hazards exist.

#### FOLLOW THESE GENERAL SAFETY RULES

Sometimes, as a result of a winter storm, a power outage can occur, or pipes can crack and burst due to extremely cold weather. To help reduce the potential for injury or death, there are general safety rules you should observe at all times:

**IF YOU FIND A PROPANE TANK ON YOUR PROPERTY THAT IS NOT YOURS, OR IF YOUR PROPANE TANK HAS BECOME DISLODGED OR IS MISSING, CONTACT YOUR PROPANE SUPPLIER OR YOUR LOCAL FIRE DEPARTMENT IMMEDIATELY.**

- **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** store or place a propane cylinder indoors or in an enclosed area such as a basement, garage, shed, or tent.
- **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.**
- If melting snow or ice floods any part of your home or farm, **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



- 1. 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.



- 2. LEAVE THE AREA IMMEDIATELY!** Get everyone out of the building or area where you suspect gas is leaking.



- 3. 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].



- 4. 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.



- 5. DO NOT RETURN TO THE BUILDING OR AREA** until your propane supplier determines that it is safe to do so.



- 6. 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.