

Propane Safety in the Asphalt Roofing Business

Propane is a safe, versatile, environmentally friendly fuel used in many applications. One of those applications is the use of propane to heat molten tar or asphalt used in commercial roofing. When working with or around propane, safety is not a sometimes thing; it should be top of mind, all the time, which is why it's important to communicate the information presented here to anyone working around propane. The purpose of this safety guide is to provide safety tips for those who work around propane containers that supply hot tar kettles.

CONTAINER PLACEMENT

There are two ways to supply fuel for commercial applications: DOT Cylinders, referred to as "cylinders," and ASME Tanks, referred to as "tanks." Where both are being referred to, they can be called "containers." Propane containers on job sites may be necessary, yet they cannot be placed just anywhere. The following provides guidelines for the placement of propane containers:

- ▶ Any ASME container filled on-site must be located so the filling connection and fixed liquid level gauge are at least 10 feet from a building or any external ignition sources.
- ▶ Keep propane container at least 10 feet from the kettle, secure cylinders at all times, and limit quantity to a two-day supply.
- ▶ Containers must be placed on a stable base to keep them from falling over. When locating a tank or cylinders, consider the potential effects of unstable ground.
- ▶ Locate tanks a sufficient distance from property lines and the structure under construction. The size of your propane container determines the distance your container must remain from buildings, property lines, and roadways.

- ▶ Consult the local Authority Having Jurisdiction to ensure proper compliance. Permitting or special requirements may be required.
- ▶ At sites using DOT Cylinders, ensure that propane cylinders are in good condition with no leaks.
- ▶ Always transport and store cylinders in an upright and secured position.
- ▶ Test all cylinders and connections for leaks with a suitable leak detector solution.

If your ASME tank must be moved, contact your propane supplier. Your supplier can ensure container distance requirements are adhered to when installing a propane container in any location.

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

Utilize this guide, safety data sheets, and information on container labels to communicate with workers in the area about what to do in the event of a propane leak or other emergency. This is the best way to keep everyone in the area safe.

When using propane cylinder exchange, code requires those exchanging cylinders to be trained to do so safely. Contact your fuel supplier or AHJ for instructions.

Propane is a liquid fuel that's stored under pressure, and in most systems is vaporized to a gas before it leaves the container. A severe "freeze burn" or frostbite is possible if liquid propane comes into contact with skin. Always use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) in accordance with your company policy.

When it mixes with air, propane is flammable and can be ignited by sources including open flames, smoking materials, electrical sparks, or even static electricity.

Propane vapor is heavier than air and may accumulate in low-lying areas. Air currents like wind or movement of people or equipment may result in leaking propane vapor being moved from the point of a leak to other areas. For this reason, if a leak is detected or suspected, valves should be promptly closed, and the area immediately evacuated upwind.

Know the smell of propane

Propane vapor is naturally odorless; to alert you to possible leaks, a distinct odor is added to it. Ask your propane supplier to perform a sniff test with you. Using the sniff test, ensure that your employees familiarize themselves with propane's smell, so they will recognize it in the workplace. Train on emergency procedures; ensure all employees know what to do if they suspect a gas leak.

If you smell gas:

- ▶ Make sure there are no flames or sparks!
- ▶ Leave the area immediately!
- ▶ Shut off the gas at the container if it is safe to do so.
- ▶ Report the leak to the fire department or propane supplier.
- ▶ Do not return to the area until it is safe.
- ▶ Have the propane system checked.
- ▶ Talk with your propane supplier about these steps.

Never store or use flammables or combustibles near propane equipment.

Learn about your propane equipment. Ensure all employees know where shut-off valves, regulators, and other important safety features are located, and how to operate them.



contact your
propane supplier

Consult with your propane supplier or your Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) to help with compliance and training, or if you have any questions.



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