
**DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORTATION**
**Research and Special Programs
Administration**
**Pipeline Safety Advisory Bulletin;
Snow Accumulation on Gas Pipeline
Facilities**

AGENCY: Research and Special Programs Administration (RSPA), DOT.

ACTION: Advisory to gas pipeline facilities of possible hazards due to snow accumulation.

SUMMARY: This advisory is to inform propane system owners and operators of the need to inform the public of possible hazards relating to snow accumulation on pipeline facilities, and to monitor the potential impact of snow accumulation on those facilities. The text of the advisory bulletin appears below.

Advisory

During the week of January 18, 1993, a series of liquefied petroleum gas (propane) incidents occurred in the California Sierra Nevadas in which escaping propane ignited causing 6 deaths, 20 injuries, and an unknown amount of property damage. A contributing factor in most of these propane gas incidents was the recordbreaking snowfall. Damage can result to propane tanks, piping, and regulators from snow or ice falling from roofs as well as actions taken to protect dwellings from abnormal snow accumulation by shoveling snow from roofs. Accordingly, the Research and Special Programs Administration (RSPA) is advising operators of propane gas pipeline facilities, regardless of whether those facilities are regulated by RSPA, to notify customers and other entities involved with snow removal of the hazardous consequences of improper removal and excessive snow accumulation.

Background

The RSPA regulation, 49 CFR 192.11, incorporates by reference the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 58 for the storage and handling of liquefied petroleum gases. Specifically, NFPA Standard 58 3-2.5.2(b) requires all regulators for outdoor installations, except regulators used for

portable industrial applications, to be designed, installed, and protected so their operation will not be affected by the elements (freezing rain, sleet, snow, ice, mud, or debris). RSPA advises operators of propane systems that precautions should be taken in the case of regulator vents such as directing them downward to prevent accumulation of moisture which, if frozen, could prevent the regulator from functioning properly. Consumers should be advised to contact their propane operators immediately, if snow or ice accumulation is blocking regulator vents or relief stacks. Persons involved in snow removal activities should be advised a broom instead of a shovel is more appropriate when clearing snow off propane tanks, associated piping regulators, tubing, gauges, or other propane system appurtenances. Operators should advise consumers that heavy snow and ice falling from roofs can damage propane systems and special care must be taken when clearing roofs of snow and ice to prevent impact on propane tanks, associated piping, and regulators. Exhaust and combustion air vents for gas appliances should be checked to assure they are clear of snow and ice. Additionally, if propane odors are detected, consumers should be advised to leave the residence immediately and contact the propane operator.

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George W. Tenley, Jr.,
Associate Administrator for Pipeline Safety.

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