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Subject: New York State Codes Division -- OFPC Safety Alert

OFPC Safety Alert - September 2010

Potential for Distribution of Propane Lacking Proper Odorant into New York State

On Thursday September 2, 2010, the Office of Fire Prevention and Control (OFPC) was notified by the Massachusetts State Fire Marshal's Office that they had discovered DCP Midstream's propane facility in Westfield, Massachusetts had possibly supplied non-odorized and/or under odorized propane to multiple distributors throughout New England and New York.

This Safety Alert has been prepared in cooperation with the Department of State Division of Code Enforcement and Administration and is distributed to notify the fire service, propane suppliers, and the general public on the issues associated with propane and safeguards to ensure that the threat is minimized.

General Facts:

Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG, commonly referred to as propane) is an odorless gas that, without the mixture of an odorizer, is difficult to detect without meters or alarms. LPG is flammable at a minimum of 2% mixture with air, can displace oxygen in high quantities, and is heavier than air

The subject LPG facility has been distributing LPG since May 7, 2010.

LPG initially purchased from other locations is not currently subject to this Safety Alert.

The subject LPG facility does not conduct retail sales to the general public. Rather, it provides product to other dealers that then either resell the LPG to retail suppliers or to the general public.

The New York State Propane Gas Association is working proactively to inform interested parties of the situation, and advising them to analyze their existing LPG supplies.

For Fire Departments:

The distinctive odor of LPG may not be present, or may be diminished, thereby making recognition that LPG is actually present within a particular situation (I.E. a pilot light out or a pipe leak) difficult. However, the lack of, or reduction in, odorant, should not have any impact on a properly calibrated meter. Fire Departments should review their meter operations manual on proper calibration and conversion factors for combustible gas monitoring specific to LPG.

Fire departments are advised to treat all LPG emergencies as high-concentration leaks, wearing full PPE and SCBA with appropriate firefighting equipment until the leak can be quantified with properly calibrated meters.

Due to the varying uses of the gas and quantities of consumers, LPG that may lack the proper level of odorant

may be in consumer fixed and portable tanks for the foreseeable future. This is not a condition that will go away in a finite amount of time.

For Code Enforcement Officials:

Ensure that LPG suppliers within your jurisdiction are aware of this Safety Alert.

In cases where LPG suppliers within your jurisdiction have non-odorized or under odorized LPG, distribution must cease from that location until the LPG can be odorized in accordance with the Fire Code of New York State and NFPA 58, Chapter 4. Testing for the appropriate levels of odorant (ethyl mercaptan) is done qualitatively by a 'sniff test' and/or quantitatively by a stain tube test.

In cases where non-odorized product is identified and voluntary compliance is not achieved, facility closure requirements are found within Chapter 27 of the Fire Code of New York State and the situation may qualify for revocation of the operating permit if so issued by the local jurisdiction.

Questions or concerns regarding code enforcement practices may be directed to the Department of State, Division of Code Enforcement and Administration at (518) 474-4073.

For Propane Suppliers:

All propane distributors should check for proper odorant level in existing supplies. In accordance with the Fire Code of New York State, and its reference standard NFPA 58, all storage and distribution tanks, including delivery vehicles and containers awaiting sale must contain odorized product. Any deficiencies warrant a voluntary shutdown, with appropriate measures undertaken to mitigate the condition. OFPC, the local code enforcement office and the local fire department should be notified if non-odorized product is discovered.

Distributors should immediately notify all other parties that they may have sold non-odorized LPG to, regardless of their location.

For the Public:

LPG without the proper odorant is dangerous, as easy, rapid detection of a leak will not be possible.

In cases when a potential of an LPG leak exists due to unmaintained equipment, is suspected, the device should be shutdown and the valves of piping and/or tanks should be closed and a qualified serviceperson should be called.

In cases where an active LPG leak is suspected, with or without an odor, the area should be evacuated and the fire department should be called.

If you have any questions regarding the status of the LPG distributed to your home or business, contact your LPG supplier.

OFPC recommends the following general precautions before using any LPG fueled device:

Ensure all connections are tight

With the tank on and the grill valves off, spray a light coat of soapy-water onto all connections and fittings. If bubbles form, they indicate a leak. Shut off the tank and do not use the device.

When using a barbeques or grill, be certain they are at least 10 feet from any building and not on or under any decks, porches, or balconies.

Do not smoke near any propane tank.

For this and other Safety Alerts (in printable PDF format) please visit the OFPC website at: <http://www.dos.state.ny.us/fire/firewww.html>

Contact Information:

General Information, Fire Departments, Propane Distributors - NYS Office of Fire Prevention & Control, Bureau of Fire Prevention (518) 474-6746

Code Enforcement Officials - NYS Division of Code Enforcement & Administration (518) 474-4073