



LPG – Portable Outdoor Heaters



INCIDENT

A Taumarunui couple were found dead in bed by their children in July 2009. The most probable cause of death is thought to be suspected carbon monoxide poisoning by the use of an outdoor patio heater in their room to keep warm.

There has also been a significant increase in the use of portable outdoor LPG heaters within cafés and outdoor eating areas.

CIRCUMSTANCES

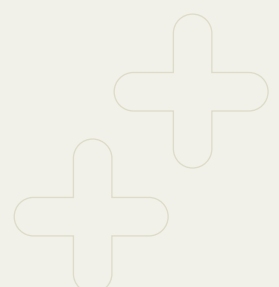
The significant increased use of portable LPG heaters within the hospitality industry is introducing a potentially harmful hazard to both patrons and staff. The two most common types used are the 'mushroom' patio heater and the 'rocket' industrial workshop heater. Both of these heaters are predominantly designed for outdoor use, in open spaces and away from areas of high human traffic. More importantly, many of these devices were designed for industrial purposes and are dangerous in locations where children and elderly people may be present.

INVESTIGATION

Although not investigated by the Department of Labour it is timely that the circumstances of this tragedy are communicated to industries where the potential for similar type accidents may occur. This is as a result of the significant use of portable outdoor LPG heaters in the enclosed spaces generally associated with cafés and outdoor eating areas. These areas are normally partially or fully enclosed and as gas appliances draw the air they need from the space around them, they also then discharge the waste combustion products (carbon monoxide) directly back into that space.

Hazards associated with these types of heaters include:

- Leaking gas which can ignite and explode;
- Radiant heat igniting nearby combustible material;
- Hot surfaces causing serious burns when touched;
- Carbon monoxide being produced and accumulating in enclosed areas;
- Frost burn from LPG contact with skin.



HAZARD ALERT

GUIDANCE

By employing safe practices, the risks associated with these types of heaters can be greatly reduced. Follow these simple rules:

- Portable Outdoor LPG heaters are NOT recommended for indoor use;
- Position heaters upright on stable ground in well ventilated areas;
- Position heaters away from ceilings, awnings, combustible materials and flammable liquids;
- Have all heaters serviced in accordance with the manufacturers recommendations;
- Allow heaters to cool before being placed upright in storage cupboards or before replacing empty gas cylinders;
- Regularly check appliances, hoses and cylinder connections (apply soapy water, if bubbles appear, you have a leak. Close the valve immediately and contact an LPG service agent.)

Further information can be obtained from the LPG Association of New Zealand at:
www.lpga.co.nz/infoSafety.php

WHICH INDUSTRIES/SECTORS OR MATTERS WILL THIS INFORMATION BE RELEVANT TO?

Hospitality Industry
Cafés, Bars, Restaurants
LPG/Gas Safety
Carbon Monoxide Poisoning
Burns
Tripping Hazard

Note: This material has been prepared using the best information available to the Department of Labour at the time of publication. Information may change over time and it may be necessary for you to obtain an update. This material is also only intended to provide general advice and does not constitute legal advice. You should make your own judgement about action you may need to take to ensure you have complied with your workplace health and safety obligations under the law.