

Safety Note #49

PROPANE TANK SAFETY



*1,000 Gallon Industrial Propane Tank
Photograph Courtesy of Lindcove REC*



*250 Gallon Residential Propane Tanks
Photograph Courtesy of Sierra Foothill REC*

Data available from the Consumer Product Safety Commission indicate a total of about 2,400 people were treated in hospitals for propane tank injuries during 2003. Most of the injuries involved burns and strained backs sustained while using five-gallon barbecue grill propane tanks. Propane tanks are addressed under California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 8, Sections 470 through 494 and California Fire Code (CFC) Article 82.

Propane Tank Safety Precautions

- The propane tank regulations apply to “places of employment in California” and as a prudent operational practice, residential propane tanks at Research and Extension Centers (RECs) should also meet the requirements of CCR Title 8, Sections 470-494 and CFC Article 82.
- Propane tanks having volumes of 125 to 500 gallon, 501 to 2,000 gallons, or more than 2,000 gallons shall be located at least 10 feet, 25 feet, or 50 feet, respectively, from buildings or public ways.
- Any propane tank that has been damaged shall be taken out of service.
- Never introduce a source of ignition (i.e., open flame or spark) within 10 feet, 25 feet, or 50 feet of propane tanks having volumes of 125 to 500 gallon, 501 to 2,000 gallons, or more than 2,000 gallons, respectively.
- Never heat (or weld on) a propane tank until it has been certified gas free by a qualified person.
- All propane tanks having a volume greater than 125 gallons require a permit to operate and shall be posted with flammable and no smoking/open flame warning signs.
- REC propane tanks, including residential propane tanks, shall undergo a triennial (every three years) permit renewal inspection by a certified inspector.
- Combustible materials (i.e., weeds, brush, trash, etc.) shall be kept more than 10 feet from propane tanks.