



DegreeDays

News from the Virginia Propane Gas Association

Plan for a Safe Handoff on Job Sites

By John V. McCoy, McCoy, Leavitt, Laskey LLC



In September of last year, a jury returned a verdict of \$73.6 million for injuries sustained by a mother, her 17-day-old son and his grandmother when a natural gas line was ruptured. Big N Deep Agricultural Development had struck the line with its bulldozer.

The incident occurred in 2015 and was tried to verdict in Kern County, California.

Big N Deep was hired for this project by Ag-Wise Enterprises. The natural gas line was owned by Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E), a major utility in California that is known for paying out a multibillion-dollar settlement related to wildfires in California within the past few years.

Ag-Wise was found to be 10 percent at fault for negligent hiring of Big N Deep as that company had struck another gas line in the past year. Had Ag-Wise done its due diligence, Big N Deep would not have gotten the job, alleged the plaintiff.

It was also alleged that PG&E did not properly mark its gas transmission line, and that it failed to have a company inspector on-site during the dig to ensure the line was marked properly. Had it done so, allegedly the accident could have been prevented.

continued on page 8 >

Register Today!

SPRING MEETING

March 26–28, 2023

Williamsburg Lodge
(Colonial Williamsburg)
Williamsburg, VA



Join us in historic Colonial Williamsburg for the 2023 Spring Meeting. We have a great event planned, including a golf tournament, industry updates, and networking/meal events with clients and colleagues! We are expecting very strong attendance for this meeting, and the room block is nearly full, so make your reservation and register for the meeting ASAP!

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President's Message



Despite Mother Nature's lack of cooperation in the *DegreeDays* territory, I hope this letter finds everyone off to a successful and productive start in 2023.

I would be remiss not to thank those who have been actively involved the last several weeks working behind the scenes on the Association's behalf. I have witnessed the scrutiny of the language, discussing potential consequences, developing a compromise, and drafting modifications to the bills that inevitably came up during our most recent General Session. As the first to acknowledge that politics is not my forte, I fall back on the message I have attempted to convey since July; that, as a whole, we are so much stronger than a single unit. Thank you to those who stepped up and took the lead.

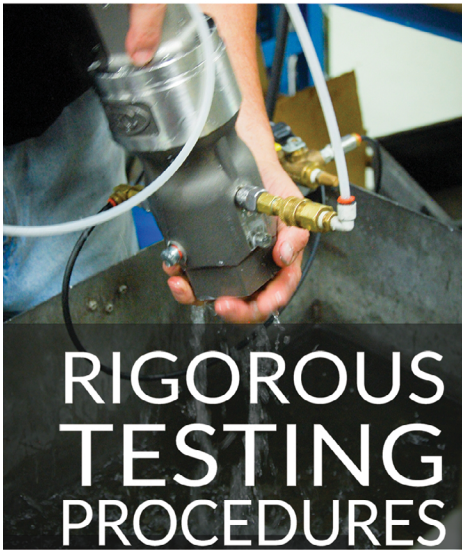
Looking down the road, we have several great events lined up for the remainder of 2023, including a potential Bobtail Rodeo, Safety and Hazmat Classes, and some great speakers on the agenda for upcoming meetings.

In just a few short weeks, we will gather again at the Williamsburg Lodge to foster some new ideas, learn from our peers, and overall have a great time collaborating. Please join us, speak up, and get involved. We need you!

Until we meet again in person, please reach out should I be of service to any of you.

Meghan Kulinski, 2022-2023 President

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Renewable Propane for Burgers 'n Dogs



On Monday, February 13th, VAPGA hosted a “cook out” event outside of the General Assembly building on the Virginia State Capitol grounds. We served almost 400 hamburgers and hot dogs in less than 2 hours! Not only was the grill powered by propane, but renewable propane at that!

Most of the Senators and Delegates stopped by for a bite, as well as their staff/aides, General Assembly support staff and even a few capitol police. Someone told us you could smell the burgers all the way at the top floor of the Pocahontas Building nearby!

Many thanks to all of the members who volunteered their time, effort, and supplies to make this event such a success. Special shout out to **John Phillips** (and his wife, Tina) and **Elizabeth McCormick** from Phillips Energy who towed the grill, tent, and much of the cooking supplies all the way from Gloucester. Also, a huge THANK YOU to **Steve McCoy** and Blossman Gas for donating tanks of renewable propane. In total we had 12 volunteers representing the following companies: AmeriGas, Tiger Fuel, Rockingham Petroleum

Cooperative, Anderson Propane, NGL Supply Terminals, Blossman Gas, NWP Energy Co., Tarantin Industries, and Phillips Energy.

In addition to our presence outside of the capitol, Immediate Past President **Colin-Wood Bradley** represented the association inside the building and was introduced during the General Assembly session by Delegate Delores McQuinn. All in all, it was a successful event and a great way to generate some exposure and positive PR for VAPGA and the Commonwealth’s propane industry. We hope to do it even bigger and better during next year’s General Assembly session.

If you would like to be more involved in VAPGA’s government affairs and legislative efforts, please reach out to Government Affairs Committee Chair, **Elizabeth McCormick** (elizabeth@peifuels.com). Also, consider making a donation to the VAPGA PAC, where all funds directly impact and go towards advancing VAPGA’s legislative efforts.

Make a PAC Donation Today!



The mission of VAPGA's PAC is to distribute contributions to candidates for the state legislature who, by their acts, demonstrate support of the propane industry and the private enterprise system. Your donations help VAPGA gain visibility and leverage access to promote our industry. Now more than ever, we need your support to combat the electrification and fuel ban efforts that threaten our industry. Please consider making a donation to the PAC today.

If you'd like to make an investment in the future of Virginia's propane industry, contact **Zach Eisenman**, Executive Director, or **John Phillips**, VPAC Committee Chair.

In addition to PAC donations, please let us know if you would be interested in hosting and/or meeting with a legislator this fall.

Thank You for Your Generous 2022 PAC Donations

These donations are made in addition to the donations accessed at dues billing

AmeriGas – Cynthia Hamlet \$100

Bergquist – Trent Johnson \$250

Elite Power & Energy Corp. – Kelly Tidwell \$1,000

Hiltz Propane Systems – Todd Haberstroh \$500

Marshall Excelsior – Kenneth Dubay \$500

NGL Supply Terminals – Thomas Krupa \$500

Rockingham Petroleum Cooperative –
Josh Stephens \$1,000

Valley Energy Company – Meghan Kulinski \$500

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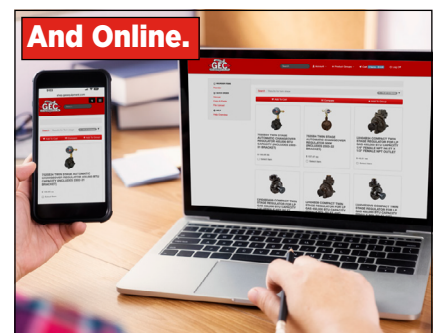
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Safe Handoff, *continued from page 1* >

PG&E settled prior to trial. Total damages recovered, including the PG&E settlement, amounted to \$110 million.

PG&E was found to be 40 percent at fault. Big N Deep was found to be 50 percent at fault for this incident.

Dangers of assuming

This story of tragedy is one that we can discuss again and again.

We all seek to do our best each day to be sure that our employees and customers are safe. However, this incident brings to light how common it is for a number of parties to share responsibility for ensuring a project, an installation, a service call or a gas delivery are done safely.

This connectivity is a difficult process to manage in some instances. At times, there is a false comfort in believing that everyone else has done their part before we begin our task. This creates a false sense of security that we can proceed.

However, as this case demonstrates, any failure by other actors can lead to disastrous results.

We can surmise that PG&E and Ag-Wise assumed that Big N Deep would only work on a valid dig ticket with proper markings. PG&E assumed Ag-Wise would only hire a qualified company to bulldoze the area. Big N Deep and Ag-Wise assumed PG&E would properly mark its transmission lines. All three were found culpable in failing to make sure the work was done safely.

We can also surmise that the gas transmission line that was struck was not marked or properly marked. Had it been properly marked, the proper course would have been to hand dig within 18 in. of each side of the marking and pothole to find the transmission line. In this way, the line strike would have been avoided, as would this tragedy.

Communication and planning

This leads to a discussion about how work is accomplished at the local propane marketer level.

Our service folks and delivery drivers need to work to communicate what has been accomplished with other members of our team. This same level of communication has to occur on a regular basis with our vendors: propane suppliers, appliance vendors/manufacturers, equipment suppliers and other trade folks on-site.

Getting the job done is not the goal; getting the job done right is the goal. Safety should always be the overarching

touchstone. How we accomplish this goal requires real planning to understand the risks and how they are minimized within the company team and with other trade folks. This concern is present on single-family home sites, as well as more complex projects like commercial construction or new home construction.

Each project requires some level of understanding of what was done by others before we begin our work. It also requires us to communicate what we have done to ensure a safe handoff.

Tell Us Your Story!

Do you have any company news to share? Big anniversaries? Success stories? Philanthropic events? We'd like to know! Please send your news to **Zach Eisenman**, Executive Director, at zach@eameetings.com. Your news may be published in a future newsletter.



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Safety & Training

As has been announced, we are returning to the pre-COVID training format that utilizes central locations for classes and a published schedule. We will not be hosting individual trainings for specific companies this year as we have been doing as a COVID-precaution. We expect the schedule to be published in mid-March and will begin opening registration for classes once that schedule is published.

As we move away from individual requests for classes and return to predetermined scheduling, it will be even more important for members to communicate training needs. In addition to the basic classes offered, I plan to include installing Appliances and Interior Vapor Distribution Systems as well as placing these systems into operation. Please provide any additional training needs you have, and all efforts will be made to include them in the schedule for 2023. We have also applied for an NPGA grant that would allow us to provide additional Community Service propane energy trainings (i.e. for first responders and emergency response personnel) as well as Hazmat Instructor Trainings (i.e. you can send a member to this training who will in



turn be qualified to conduct Hazmat trainings for other employees at your company.)

Planning also remains underway for the return of the Bobtail Rodeo this year. This has always been a well-attended program that combines training, skill, competition, and comradery for everyone who participates. More information will be given once plans are finalized and I will remind everyone, we need volunteers to assist with delivery of this event.

Please forward request or training ideas to [Dennis Cruise](#) or [Trent Johnson](#).

Dennis Cruise
Safety & Training Coordinator

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Hiltz Propane Systems, Inc., in Marietta, Pennsylvania, is excited to announce the appointment of Aaron Becker to the position of President effective October 17, 2022. Matthew Hiltz, who has been acting as President & Chief Executive Officer will continue as Chief Executive Officer.

Becker joins the Hiltz team with over twenty years of managerial experience, most recently working at Haller Enterprises, in which he acted as President during the last four years of his fifteen-year tenure with the company. Haller Enterprises is an industry leader in the mechanical and electrical trades in the Northeast region. As President, Becker was responsible for the oversight and direction of all sales and operational functions.

Hiltz shared that, "He is a seasoned leader with significant experience that will be a great asset as we continue growing. Building on our strong foundation—an industry leader in turn-key propane storage solutions and a culture of integrity – together we have a great opportunity to lead the industry with deep expertise and a continued commitment to service. I am confident of his leadership and happy to welcome him aboard."

In his new role with the Hiltz Companies, Becker joins the executive leadership team to develop and promote improved results for the day-to-day operations. We are confident that the collaborative efforts of Hiltz and Becker will result in the successful execution of the company's vision and projected future direction.



Aaron Becker

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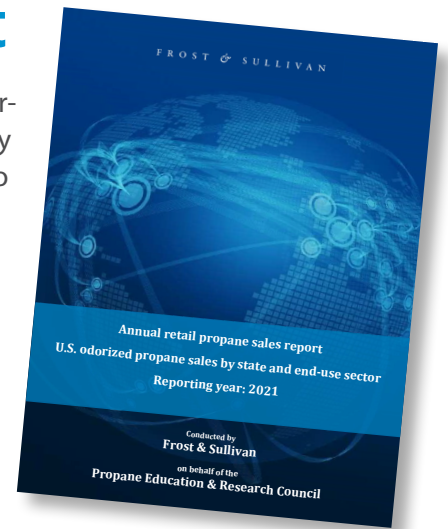
2021 Annual Retail Propane Sales Report

In 2021, U.S. retail (odorized) propane sales totaled 9.54 billion gallons, a 1.12% year-over-year increase from the 9.44 billion gallons sold in 2020. The U.S. primary energy consumption also increased from 93.13 quadrillion British Thermal Units (BTU) to about 97 quadrillion BTU during the same period.

Heightened commercial and industrial activities across the regions post-COVID-19 pandemic have played a crucial role in this recovery. Total sales for 2021 were 7.4% above the ten-year average of 8.9 billion gallons of odorized propane volumes per year.

Virginia ranked in the top-15 states in 2021 total retail propane sales, with 258 million gallons sold!

The full report is available for download [here](#).



Top Propane Retailers: 2023 Overall List

LP Gas' annual ranking of the largest retail propane companies in the U.S. is measured by gallon sales. See who made the list, ranked by 2022 retail propane gallon sales, by clicking the links below.

[OVERALL LIST](#)

[HIGHEST GALLON SALES](#)

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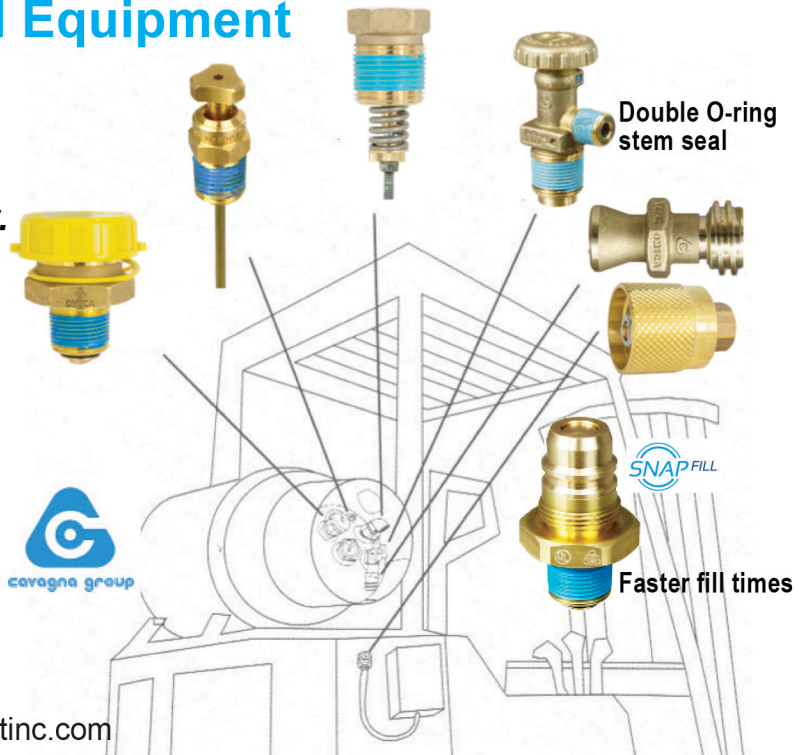
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Feature Your Company in DegreeDays

We are still accepting advertising for the 2023 issues of *Degree Days*, the official publication of the Virginia Propane Gas Association. *Degree Days* will be published bi-monthly, starting in February, and advertising can be purchased for a full year or on a per-issue basis. With a reach of approximately 500 members and industry contacts, *Degree Days* is the best way to promote your products or services to Virginia's propane community.

Click [here](#) to access the **2023 Newsletter Advertising Contract**. It is also included in this newsletter on the last page. Complete the form and send it to the address provided. Contact [Lorraine Meade](#) for ad information or [Tami Rawlette](#) for payment information.

2023 Rebates



We are again offering \$300 Safe Appliance Rebates for 2023! **New for 2023, 7kW-50kW residential generators will be included in the safe appliance rebate program!** There are 250 safe appliance rebates, and they will be available all year until they are gone. See below for program guidelines and a copy of the 2023 application. We also have 4 remaining vehicle Autogas rebates for \$2,500 each. Application below.

[\\$300 Safe Appliance Rebates Guidelines](#)
[\\$300 Safe Appliance Rebates Application](#)

250 remaining

[Vehicle Autogas Rebates](#)

4 remaining

We are also in the process of applying for PERC funds to support a "Duty To Warn" rebate, where each marketer would be able to apply for \$500 to help offset the cost of their Duty To Warn initiatives. More information will be released once the docket has been approved by PERC. We will likely have an announcement at the Spring Meeting in Williamsburg.

Email [Tami Rawlette](#) or call **804.241.2232** for additional information or to request an application and pre-approval numbers.

2022-2023 VAPGA Leadership

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Meghan Kulinski, *Valley Energy*

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Taylor Sutton, *Tiger Fuel*

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Jamison Walker, *Blossman Gas*

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John Phillips, *Phillips Energy*

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Chuck Tunnell, *CUI*

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Trent McKenzie, *Woodgate Petroleum*

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GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

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elizabeth@peifuels.com

MARKET DEVELOPMENT

Tom Krupa, *NGL Supply (Interim)*

EDUCATION & SAFETY

Trent Johnson, *Bergquist, Inc.*

trent.johnson@bergquistinc.com

MEMBERSHIP

Rita Pecilunas, *Otodata*

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YOUNG GASSERS

Jamison Walker, *Blossman Gas*

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Trent McKenzie, *Woodgate Petroleum*

tmckenzie@woodgate-petroleum.com

VAPAC

John Phillips, *Phillips Energy*

jphillips@peifuels.com

Strategic Propane Reserve

On February 16, 2023, Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) introduced legislation that directs the Department of Energy and Energy Information Administration (EIA) to study the feasibility and effectiveness of establishing a national strategic propane reserve. This legislation would not create a specific propane reserve. Instead, it requires research into the possible benefits and concerns of establishing a propane reserve. Congressional interest in a potential propane reserve is not new, as Senator Al Franken (D-MN) introduced similar legislation following the 2013/2014 winter that would have required DOE to conduct a study to “mitigate future [propane] supply shocks.”

The National Propane Gas Association secured key changes in this legislation to include: having EIA involved with the study so it would be data-focused and not political, considerations of alternatives to a national reserve, and ensuring the propane industry is engaged in the development of the study.

This legislation was referred to the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, which has yet to indicate when or if this legislation will be considered. A copy of this legislation can be viewed [here](#).

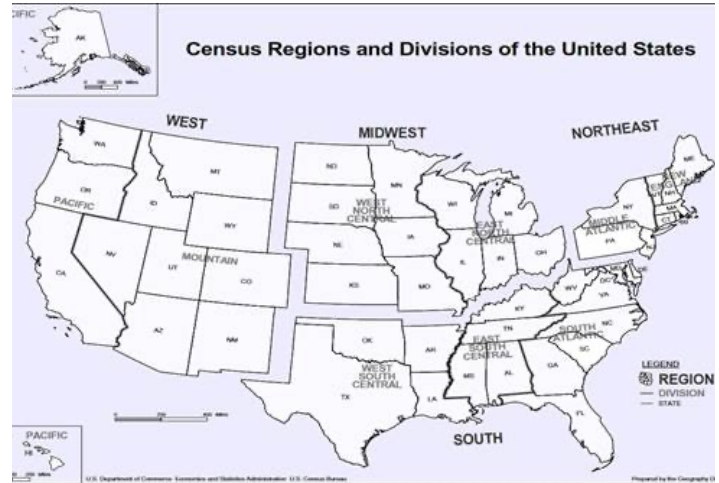
If you have any questions, please reach out to NPGA’s Legislative Affairs Manager, [Andrew Healey](#).

March Heating Degree Days

A heating degree day (HDD) is a measure of how cold a location is. It’s derived by comparing the average outdoor temperature to a baseline of 65 degrees. More extreme cold temperatures result in a higher number of HDDs, which typically translate to an increased demand for space heating by energy consumers.

The below data sets detail the number of HDDs that occurred in the month of March during the past 3 years, as well as the month’s 10-year average, broken down by Census Division.

Census Division	March 22	March 21	March 20	March 10-Year Average
New England	843	838	779	929
Middle Atlantic	760	736	670	845
East North Central	791	690	733	867
West North Central	847	673	745	846
South Atlantic	287	283	232	353
East South Central	386	339	293	435
West South Central	265	201	139	236
Mountain	608	646	602	518



Additional HDD data can be found under the Supply and Logistics section on the [Member Dashboard](#) of NPGA’s website. For more information, please contact NPGA’s [Jacob Peterson](#).

Nashville is for Networking!

Don’t miss the chance to network with thousands of propane industry professionals at NPGA’s 75th [Southeastern Convention & International Propane Expo™](#) being held April 23 – 25 in Nashville. With multiple opportunities to meet & greet, there is something for everybody -- from bow ties to blue jeans! Add these to your [Expo schedule](#):

- [LP Gas Hall of Fame Induction Dinner*](#), a black-tie celebration of the people who have helped establish, advance, and grow the propane industry
- [Prayer Breakfast*](#) with inspirational guest speaker Becca Stevens
- [Expo Hall Welcome Reception](#) and grand opening of the exhibit floor
- [WIP Roundtable & Reception](#) with Bridget Piraino

All are welcome at these events. *Additional fee applies.

EventSphere is the official housing provider for the 2023 Expo™. EventSphere’s “PassKey” technology lets participants search hotel availability, compare rates, and reserve in one convenient location. Once the reservation is booked, participants can quickly and efficiently manage their reservations online. The NPGA room block is available until April 3, 2023. Book early for the best selection!

Check out the [Official Hotel List](#), then [click](#) or call 1-866-446-3551 (Monday - Friday: 9:00 am - 5:00 pm EST)



Virginia Propane Gas Association

2023 NEWSLETTER ADVERTISING CONTRACT

Degree Days is the official publication of the Virginia Propane Gas Association.

It is published bi-monthly in a digital format and has a circulation of approximately 500 members and industry contacts.

Advertising Requirements

Advertisements must be sent via email in hi-resolution PDF, JPG, EPS or TIFF format.

Full page ads are 8.5 inches x 11 inches. Half page ads are 8.5 inches x 5.5 inches.

Please send ads to lorraine@eameetings.com.

This form is an order and authorization to secure space in *Degree Days*, the official publication of the Virginia Propane Gas Association and may be used by advertisers or their agents.

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