



NCASSTM
NATIONWIDE
CATERERS
ASSOCIATION

Ensuring LPG Gas Safety For All

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For many mobile and outdoor event caterers, LPG is the main source of power used for cooking, heating or powering generators. Making sure that LPG is safely used and stored is essential. Provided that it is handled correctly, LPG is safe to use. However, if it is handled poorly, LPG can cause substantial and potentially life-changing harm.

LPG cylinders are pressurised vessels that keep gas liquefied under air pressure. If the cylinders and/or connection systems are not correctly managed, the results can be disastrous causing major explosions or fires. Sadly, this is not just a theoretical possibility, as numerous LPG incidents have occurred over the years. These incidents have mostly occurred in outside catering units, particularly, gazebos and tented structures.

Although we are not the regulators, we have a considered insight into the sector and feel strongly that we can help to make positive changes by raising awareness, encouraging our members to follow the correct procedures and recommending engineers that are trusted to carry out gas installations and safety checks correctly.

When it comes to LPG, we all have a collective responsibility to keep things safe and uphold standards in order to promote best practice and safeguard the sector.

With regards LPG regulations, the HSE stipulates that:

- “Any work with gas appliances will be subject to the duties imposed by the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 (GSIUR)”
- “These Regulations require that all new appliances for commercial catering must be CE, UKCA or UKNI marked. CE, UKCA or UKNI marking indicates conformity with the Regulations and that a notified body has approved the appliance.

Although the Regulations apply principally to domestic appliances, industrial space heaters and commercial catering equipment are also covered. The principal standard that applies to safety standards for gas-fired catering equipment is BS EN 203-1

- Everyone who does this type of work (installation and repair work on gas appliances) must be competent. Whether contractors or in-house staff do Gas safety in catering and hospitality the work, the company or individual must be Gas Safe-registered and operatives must have valid certificates of competence relevant to the particular types of gas equipment and gas work they are involved with. This is a requirement of GSIUR.

We have been researching and understanding the challenges that

the use or sometimes misuse of LPG brings; some of these challenges are:

- A lack of LPG support and training for mobile traders, event organisers and environmental health organisers (EHOs)
- A lack of industry consistency and interpretation of mobile LPG standards
- The issuing of illegal gas certificates (a certificate issued by an engineer that works out of scope – for example, they may have the qualification for LPG, both domestic and commercial, but may not have the qualification for catering, or it could be an engineer that has the qualification for LPG commercial but not commercial mobile catering.

Also, appliances which are not suitable, such as those without flame failure devices and even appliances designed for domestic use are signed off as safe to use)

- A shortage of qualified gas engineers – particularly those with competence in mobile LPG
- Instances of unqualified persons carrying out fixes or repairs on gas appliances
- The carrying out of poor or illegal practice with regards siting of LPG cylinders, equipment handling,

unsuitable hosing, a lack of specific safety devices or use of incorrect hose clips.

With that being the case, it is clear that more needs to be done to raise the standards and ultimately ensure the safety of the industry for all those involved in it.

We asked our Gas safety consultant and qualified [LPG Engineer Marc Rowson](#) for his thoughts on where the sectors sits when it comes to the use of LPG:

“The mobile catering industry through its diverse and often challenging set ups and installations has been subject to misinterpretation and application of standards and laws. Although there is satisfactory guidance and standards in place, often the knowledge of where to find this information is lacking, and not just by the engineer, but in the Gas industry, The Gas Safe Register and also the HSE.

The Liquid Gas UK Code of Practice 24-3 is a document that is approved by the Gas Safe Register as a Formative document that is referred to in order to help traders achieve a suitable level of safety. The information contained within this document should an engineer follow, would ordinarily be doing enough to achieve a minimum standard of safety in certain scenarios and set ups. This is not the only document

however and sometimes bespoke and specific appliances and set-ups will require the excerpts and guidance from other documents to help achieve a satisfactory safety standard.

It is not always straight forward and there can be grey areas. That is why it is so important that traders, engineers, industry bodies and all sector stakeholders work together to reduce inconsistencies, misinterpretations and mistakes whilst always to look improve standards with the overall use of LPG. As a sector, we must ensure that we are all doing all we can to safeguard this industry and most importantly keep the public safe.”

Mobile caterers that are busy trading throughout the year, will be frequently setting up, taking down and transporting LPG appliances and cylinders, subjecting them to a lot of wear and tear and irregularities. It is therefore essential that the time is taken to carry out a series of simple and straightforward safety checks each time that they setup/take down.

The LPG gas checklists provided by NCASS can support this process. It is also vital that those all-important annual gas safety checks or repair works are carried out by a qualified Gas Safe engineer who understands the unique requirements for LPG.

With mobile caterers frequently

set up side by side, appliances and LPG cylinders are often in very close quarters with other combustible materials and ignition sources. Event organisers can do more to enhance their support for traders by facilitating safer setup, arranging optimal placement and spacing arrangement, and placing increased emphasis on incorporating gas safety measures into their overall event planning and on-site preparations.

EHOs who frequently enforce H&S standards within mobile catering are often unaware of what should be in place to ensure LPG set ups are safe and legal. Whilst often confident in the general gas safety standards they are less confident in the nuances relevant to LPG where ironically the risk of something going wrong can be higher. This is not surprising as few are given the chance to develop their understanding in these matters and are unable to access specific training and resources relevant to mobile LPG.

NCASS are not a governing body on this matter and are not looking to implement the laws ourselves – we are merely trying to draw necessary attention to what we believe continues to be a significant issue. We aim to work with the relevant authorities and the wider sector to move forward in a cooperative and safer manner.

To do this, we have to try and remove

the inconsistencies in standards, inspections and certifications. We believe it's unfair for engineers to follow varying standards or have different interpretations. This can result in scenarios where one engineer approves something that another engineer doesn't. This makes it impossible for traders to take responsibility and work to best practice. As an industry, we have to work together to do more and be better.

Two ways we are seeking to address the identified issues include the LPG safety workshops we have been hosting for Environmental Health Officers and those involved in the events industry:

[These workshops](#) are tailored for local authorities and event organisers, they provide practical insights, outline real-life scenarios, address common challenges and help to identify unsafe or dangerous LPG setups. Facilitated by an NCASS Gas Safety Consultant and a qualified LPG engineer with extensive industry experience, these workshops offer invaluable firsthand knowledge on the many nuances of mobile LPG usage.

Alongside this, we have launched a comprehensive [LPG safety training course](#) designed to give anyone the confidence and knowledge to safely and effectively use LPG in a catering setting.

This course is essential for anyone working with or assessing the suitability of mobile LPG setups.

It outlines the key safety rules for using LPG appliances and provides an understanding of handling LPG cylinders in any scenario or environment. It is an imperative qualification for any of your team (where applicable) who works with LPG or helps to setup, as such we would highly recommend you give staff this training.

Fiona West, NCASS Environmental Health Specialist, said:

“The Safe Use of LPG in mobile and outdoor catering course and the dedicated workshops aim to fill the knowledge gap and enhance awareness about the safe utilisation of LPG in mobile and outside catering operations. Safety is our top priority and education is key, which is why we’re dedicated to empowering individuals within the industry and providing them with the necessary skills to ensure a secure working environment and improve standards with the overall use of LPG.”

[The LPG training course](#) can be accessed through our online training portal, and a significant discount is available for all members.

Completion of the course will reward you with an accredited certificate acknowledging your commitment to

improving LPG safety standards and protocols.

For more information on either the online course or to book places on the workshop, call 0300 124 6866 or email info@ncass.org.uk.

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Contact Us

Call us: 0300 124 6866

Email us: info@ncass.org.uk.

    @ncass_uk

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