

October 2008 Safety Meeting

Documentation for the Propane Industry

The need to document is like insurance - you don't appreciate it until the day you actually need and/or use it. The need to document is never more essential than now. Highly organized plaintiff's attorneys are well prepared. With the help of the internet, attorneys can find out about accidents in real time. Cases are becoming more difficult to defend, even when the gas company has viable defenses because of the substantial injuries that may be involved in these accidents.

The **Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA)**, states that "a hazard is anything in the workplace environment, physical or human, which may lead to an accident or injury." A risk is the likelihood of the hazard causing an accident or injury. You must assess the risk or likelihood of a hazard causing an accident or injury. To ensure the workplace is safe, all risks need to be assessed, all hazards controlled and properly documented. Employers, managers and employees all have a legal obligation to keep the workplace safe.

Employers and managers in organizations often overlook the role employees should take in documenting policies and procedures. Management often assumes that writing (documenting) is a task that anyone can easily perform. Employees often become frustrated and resentful due to difficulties they experience in documenting content in the right context. Employees must be trained in order to understand documentation. The proper training can be a great investment.

Tips for documenting:

- Use proper forms
- Be concise
- Use simple English
- Don't repeat information
- Be clear
- Document with a purpose
- State the facts

How and what should we document?

This will vary from company to company. However, documents should be regulated by federal, state and local laws and codes. Employees should also be guided by company policies and procedures. A great tool for documenting is the Operations and Maintenance Handbook developed by the Propane Educational Research Council (PERC). The handbook is written to the 2004 edition of NFPA 58 and may require some minor modifications for the 1998 edition.

Consider the following case studies:

An explosion and fire burned down a home. The propane company reviewed the customer's file and found a complete system check with the customer's signature and documentation of a leak check on a recent out of gas call. The customer had also received numerous safety warnings about unauthorized work on the system. The fire investigation quickly eliminated the integrity of the propane system as a cause.

A propane company's bobtail driver delivers propane to a customer after a service interruption. After the driver leaves the residence, a fire occurs. The bobtail driver stated he did a leak check but did not document the task.

A company's safety director conducts a VK on a bobtail. He documents a bulge in the delivery hose and states it should be replaced. The safety director allows the hose to be used until a replacement can be purchased. The hose ruptures at a customer's home shortly thereafter.

Class Discussion

Have employees discuss and review each case study. Explain how and why proper documentation is necessary. Also, review company forms that employees should use to document.

Closing

Documentation should always be based on factual information. Always be very careful what you put in writing. Only time reveals all, and no matter what someone says, their actions will always speak louder than their words. It will only take a little effort and a few minutes each day to keep an account of important tasks. One day you may wish you had. Many marketers have found documentation can truly make a difference.

October 2008 Test

Documentation for the Propane Industry

Name _____ Date _____

Instruction: Read and answer each of the following questions. When complete, grade the test and review incorrect answers so each employee is “armed” with the correct answers before they leave the training.

- (1) According to OSHA, a hazard is anything in the workplace environment, physical or human, which may lead to injury.
 - A. True
 - B. False

- (2) A risk is the likelihood of a hazard causing an accident or injury.
 - A. True
 - B. False

- (3) Employers and managers should not assume that documenting is an easy task for all employees.
 - A. True
 - B. False

- (4) Proper documentation should include repeated information.
 - A. True
 - B. False

- (5) Documentation should always be based on factual information.
 - A. True
 - B. False

**October 2008
Answer Key**

- 1. A**
- 2. A**
- 3. A**
- 4. B**
- 5. A**