





SERENE LAKES PROPANE INCIDENT: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

April 22, 2011

Q1. What is the purpose and meaning of the abatement order some residents have received?

A. The abatement order mandates owners of leaking propane systems have their properties remediated to a reduced risk level in an expeditious manner. The abatement process seeks the cooperation of owners and outlines options and deadlines. Should a property owner not respond or choose to allow the County to reduce the risk, the order authorizes Placer County to enter the property to reduce the risk from the leak. In cases of non-responsive owners or owners who have opted to allow the County to mitigate, the property owner shall be assessed all costs of risk reduction as outlined in Placer County Code.

Risk reduction of properties on which leaking propane systems have been detected must be completed by certified hazardous waste contractors. Prior to any work being started, contractors must submit the project work plan to Placer County Environmental Health (PCEH).

Q2. Should property owners clear "propane systems" (tanks, the regulator at the tank and the regulator at the house, and the piping to the ground) even if no leaks have been detected?

- A. Propane systems, as defined above, must at all times be kept cleared of snow and ice in order to prevent failures. After a snow fall, and throughout the snow season, it is important to clear propane systems of snow accumulations in a timely manner. Care should be taken during general snow removal operations to avoid shoveling, blowing or plowing snow onto any propane systems. Contract services should be advised of this requirement.
 - Above Ground Systems: Snow needs to be completely removed from (and kept off of the area) above and around the tank, the tank regulator as well as the piping all the way to the ground. The second stage regulator (at the house) also must be cleared (and kept clear) of snow and ice all the way to ground level.

(Note: Lateral pressure from snow build up has been known to damage propane systems.)

• **Underground Propane Systems:** Snow needs to be completely cleared (and kept clear) from the access dome on the tank. The second stage regulator (at the house) also must be clear of snow and ice all the way to ground level.

Should anyone clearing snow from propane systems detect the odor of propane, he/she should immediately back out of the area a safe distance and call 911. Truckee Fire Department will respond to assess the hazard.

Q3. What should non-resident property owners do to protect their properties?

A. Public Safety officials recommend that property owners winterize their homes turn off propane at the tank, and turn off electricity at the main breaker. If unable to take these steps personally, property owners should make necessary arrangements to have these things done by friends, family or by other means.

Q4. What should I do to be safe if I visit my Serene Lakes residence after an extended absence?

A. If you are returning to your home at Serene Lakes after having been gone for any period of time, you should stay alert for the odor of propane as you enter your house or property. If an odor is detected, immediately evacuate to a safe location and call 911.

Q5. Once my propane system has been cleared of snow and ice, and I do not have a previously documented leak, what do I need to do to have my vendor refill it?

A. Gas purveyors are allowed to refill tanks if:

- The propane system is cleared of snow and ice to the ground; and
- Overhead hazards to the propane system (typically snow that might slide off the roof) have been removed. If asked, Truckee FPD will confirm the absence of uncontained propane on the property

Q6. Is the voluntary evacuation order still in effect? What does it mean?

A. The voluntary evacuation order was put into place to encourage residents to avoid the area as much as possible until the propane emergency is resolved. Public Safety officials understand the inconvenience this causes, but are supported in this decision by the fact that lethal pieces of debris from the one house that exploded were found 300 feet away.

Q7. How do I get power restored?

- **A.** Since the home exploded on April 8th, PG&E has instituted the following procedure for reconnecting power to individual homes:
 - Propane systems (tank, regulators and piping) must be cleared to the ground.
 - Call PG&E (530) 889-3215 and request reconnection.
 - PG&E will come to the residence, if no propane presence detected they will then restore power.

Q8. What information is available at the Evacuation Information Center (EIC)?

A. Information available:

- Vehicle placards, required for permanent residents, second-home owners, visitors, contractors and others with legitimate reasons for being in Serene Lakes are available at the EIC located in the Summit Restaurant and Bar, 22002 Donner Pass Rd. in Soda Springs. Though closed for Easter Weekend, the EIC will reopen on Monday, April 25th and will remain open from noon to 4 p.m. for that week. Those arriving in the area when the EIC is closed should pick up a placard the next day.
- Updated information about the status of the propane incident and the on-going clean up.
- Additional information is available on the Placer County website (<u>www.placer.ca.gov</u>) or through the Public Information line at (530) 886-5310.

Q9. Is electricity off in some parts of Serene Lakes?

A. Power has been interrupted at some individual residences and in some areas due to falling power poles and failures in the electrical drops and weather heads, i.e., the loss of power <u>was not caused by propane</u>. However, until the propane situation in Serene Lakes is remediated, power will not be restored by PG&E as a matter of routine. Procedures to have power restored are as shown in Q7, above.