

Essential Propane Safety in High Snowfall Areas

Winters in high snowfall areas can be some of the most magnificent, but they can also be the most challenging. Accumulated snow and ice have the potential to damage your propane system. While you can't predict the first snowstorm or hazardous weather condition, you are in the best position to take measures to plan for them. Snowstorms require prompt attention, but your safety comes first. Use caution in the areas surrounding your home after the storm.

Get to know your propane system

If you are not familiar with your propane system, take a few minutes to review it. Identify core components — tank, regulators, meter, piping, and supply valves — as well as any appliance vents. Be sure you know where your gas supply valve is located, in case you need to close it in the event of an emergency. For more information, contact Paraco Gas.

Mark your tank and regulator

Mark your tank with a brightly colored stake or flag taller than the maximum anticipated snow depth. Also, mark your secondary pressure regulator or meter. It is usually near the side of your home. Check local ordinances about marking tanks and regulators, and follow any rules applicable to your jurisdiction. It is important to mark your tank and equipment to enable emergency and propane service personnel to locate it at all times.

Have an adequate supply of propane in your tank

In high snowfall areas, roads leading to your home might not be accessible for delivery, particularly after a snowstorm. It is recommended that you establish a regular delivery schedule with your propane retailer. Designate an area to pile any accumulation of snow safely away from any propane equipment. Advise snow removal companies of the location of your propane tanks and equipment, so they can keep clear of it to avoid damage and potentially dangerous gas leaks.

Talk to your contractors

If you use a snow removal service, make sure that the service knows the location of all propane equipment on the property. Instruct them to keep their equipment clear of all parts of your propane system. If your snow removal service shovels snow off your roof, instruct them to never shovel snow onto any part of the propane system. Provide a copy of this PDF to your snow removal service. If you need additional copies, contact Paraco Gas.

Keep snow and ice from accumulating on propane equipment

Snow or ice accumulation can potentially cause parts of your propane system to crack or break, resulting in a gas leak. It is your responsibility to make sure that all propane pipes, valves, regulators, and tanks are clear of snow and ice. Gently brush away snow or ice that has accumulated around the tank, meter, regulator, and any other piping. Do this using a broom or by hand. If you must use a shovel, use extreme caution around all equipment. If you notice any snow or ice buildup that cannot be removed easily, contact Paraco Gas immediately. DO NOT attempt to remove snow or ice by kicking or hitting equipment.

Be alert to snow buildup on rooftops and other areas

Frequently check where snow or ice collect on your roof, structure, or nearby trees and clear it if you believe it might fall on any part of your propane system. Never shovel snow off roofs and onto propane equipment. Heavy accumulations of snow or ice falling on tanks, regulators, meters, piping, or valves may cause damage that could result in a gas leak. In high snowfall areas, drifting snow and snow and ice sliding off the roof may require additional regulator and vent protection. Consider installing snow protection or a “snow shelter” above your meter or regulator to prevent snow and ice damage. Contact Paraco Gas for more information.

Keep vents clear

Appliance vents and chimney flues must ALWAYS be clear of snow or ice. Some homes may have “direct” vents, which are close to the ground. Improper venting can cause carbon monoxide to become trapped in your home, causing serious illness or even death.

Clear driveways and pathways to propane tanks.

Please remember that a propane delivery truck needs at least a 10-foot-wide path to be able to deliver fuel to your home. Also, keep the tank area and a path to the tank free of snow. When plowing, snow blowing, or shoveling, do not push or pile snow around your tank, meter, regulator, or piping.

If you smell gas:

- 1. NO FLAMES OR SPARKS!** Immediately put out all smoking materials and other open flames. Do not operate lights, appliances, telephones, or cell phones. Flames or sparks from these sources can trigger an explosion or a fire.
- 2. LEAVE THE AREA IMMEDIATELY!** Get everyone out of the building or area where you suspect gas is leaking.
- 3. SHUT OFF THE GAS.** Turn off the main gas supply valve on your propane tank if it is safe to do so. To close the valve, turn it to the right (clockwise).
- 4. REPORT THE LEAK.** From a neighbor’s home or other nearby building away from the gas leak, call your propane retailer right away. If you can’t reach Paraco Gas, call 911 or your local fire department.
- 5. DO NOT RETURN TO THE BUILDING OR THE AREA** until Paraco Gas determines that it is safe to do so.
- 6. GET YOUR SYSTEM CHECKED.** Before you attempt to use any of your propane appliances, Paraco Gas or a qualified service technician must check your entire system to ensure that it is leak-free.

Tips for Vacation Homes or Rentals

A vacation or second home in a high snowfall area requires special attention because you may not be at the home to clear snow and ice after a winter storm. For your safety and the safety of others:

Designate a responsible person or party, such as your property management company or a snow removal service, to monitor your propane system regularly while you are away.

Make sure to:

- Show the location of all tanks, pipes, regulators, and other parts of your propane system, and give instructions on the importance of keeping these areas clear of snow and ice.
- Give instructions to regularly and carefully clear snow and ice accumulations away from all propane equipment, including tanks and secondary pressure regulators.
- Provide a copy of this PDF and give instructions to follow all safety guidelines. If you need additional brochures, contact Paraco

When you return to your home, carefully examine the propane system for evidence of damage from snow and ice. Be especially attentive to any propane odor, both inside or outside the home. If you smell gas, take immediate action as provided in this PDF.

It is a good idea to prepare a diagram of the propane system on your property and to provide it to the responsible party, as well as to your homeowners' association, property management company, and all contractors who are going to work on the property. This diagram should include your contact information in case of an emergency. You should also make sure Paraco Gas has your up-to-date contact information. It is important that emergency personnel be able to contact you as needed.