

Get the Facts about Safety Documentation

BY ALEX BURNS



Propane safety experts report that on average, 35% of safety documentation is inaccurate or incomplete. At first glance, it may appear as an exaggeration. However, when considering factors like complex industry requirements, limitations associated with traditional paper documentation, and the range of human error, this percentage becomes all too absolute. The reality of the situation is that propane marketers using outdated paper-driven processes are putting themselves at risk for safety and compliance issues.

How can 35% of safety documentation become inaccurate? A single safety inspection form has 50 required fields including critical operating tests like leak checks and flow and lock-up testing. This means 50 opportunities for incomplete or inaccurate data on just one of hundreds of forms. Once a form is completed in the field, it is filed away in a cabinet and typically not revisited until the appliance or system is due for reevaluation. In a worst-case scenario, the form may only get a second look when an issue arises with the inspected system. By that point, it may be too late to assess if the form was completed properly, and may not be sufficient evidence to protect the company from fines or legal claims.

MAJOR CHALLENGES OF SAFETY DOCUMENTATION

Paper-driven safety documentation allows too great of a margin of error between the field and the filing cabinet. This method provides no efficient way for management to audit safety inspection data. After all, 50 form fields per safety inspection form is time-consuming to complete by hand, and even more time-consuming to audit. Now is that 35% average looking more plausible? Additional liabilities of traditional paper safety documentation processes in the propane industry include...

- Lack of systematic processes to follow up on inaccurate or incomplete service records and inspections
- Difficulties keeping track of compliance requirements, like when regulators need to be replaced or when DOT cylinder re-qualifications are due, and maintaining NFPA 58 Cathodic Protection inspection requirements
- Accountability issues, no simple way for management to identify technicians that are repeating mistakes or omissions on documentation

Safety documentation is a glaring challenge that propane marketers face daily. Beyond the internal inefficiencies and opera-

tional safety hazards that inaccurate safety documentation can cause, it simply cannot be overlooked that inaccurate safety documentation poses a serious threat to overall compliance and risk management. Singular issues that could arise from inaccurate or incomplete safety data can lead to costly fines, dangerous scenarios, and potentially expensive litigation. So, how can propane marketers address and overcome the challenges of safety documentation in our industry? Implementing a technology-based safety documentation process.

A CRITICAL SOLUTION FOR PROPANE MARKETERS

Utilizing a technology-driven safety documentation process is the way to take your safety documentation from 65% accurate to 100% accurate. Doing so will maximize internal efficiencies and significantly reduce company risk.

A technology-based safety documentation system has the ability to automatically store, retrieve, and audit your safety documentation and compliance data. Instead of letting documents gather dust in a filing cabinet, they are automatically updated to a secure cloud-based platform. Complex documents, like safety inspection forms with 50 fields, can be evaluated for accuracy and completeness in a matter of seconds by advanced Error Recognition Technology. Forms with missing or incomplete information are immediately flagged for correction. Additionally, any important deadline requirements, like replacements and renewal inspections, are logged and flagged for a future follow-up. Adopting a technology-driven process delivers highly valuable advantages:

- An automated, systematic process to follow up on service records and inspections
- Proactive alerts for compliance deadlines, like regulator replacement, DOT cylinder re-qualifications, and NFPA 58 Cathodic Protection requirements
- Photo documentation capabilities to document NFPA 58 container placement requirements
- Mobile safety inspections that automatically sync to a cloud-based system
- Management reports to analyze safety data and assess employee performance

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All of these elements come together to create an efficient and effective safety documentation process that translates immediate benefits into lasting results. Beyond improving efficiencies directly affected by safety data, a technology-based system will enhance daily operations and provide important performance snapshots for management staff.

Management can use the system to easily generate 12 individual management reports from a single safety inspection form. The system can also generate management reports for individual service technicians. This provides a detailed summary of technician performance so management can customize training to specific service technicians based on the errors that have been identified, thus minimizing future mistakes.

Today, the P3 Compliance System has become the leading technology-based safety documentation system for propane marketers. It was developed to serve a glaring need in our industry, and continues to adapt and advance to continue doing just that. New integration capabilities with back-end operating systems, monthly CTMV discharge system inspections, and offline mobile capabilities are some of the latest advancements that help

propane marketers reduce risk, maintain compliance, and maximize efficiencies.

Because, at the end of the day, that's what it is all about. Does your current safety documentation process have what it takes to help your company maximize efficiencies, avoid potential safety risks, and uphold regulatory compliance? If you rely on a paper-driven process, the answer is: "Not likely." Stop struggling with the challenges of safety documentation and start benefiting from the solution. Schedule a free no-obligation consult to see how the P3 Compliance System can transform your safety documentation data, maximize internal operations, and most importantly, protect your propane company.

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