

The Future of Safety Inspections in the Propane Industry

BY ALEX BURNS



If you are propane marketer, chances are you are completing safety inspections of propane systems regularly for new customers, move-in and move-out scenarios, and systems that have been modified. Safety inspections are a propane industry best practice that marketers utilize to maintain customer safety and reduce liability.

Many marketers reviewing this process have wondered, "How can I create a more efficient process that will lead to time savings for my team? How can we ultimately produce more accurate and complete documentation that will help protect the company?"

HOW SAFETY INSPECTIONS AFFECT YOUR BUSINESS

Let's face it, our field technicians don't love paperwork. On any given day, field technicians could be conducting multiple safety inspections, and just one safety inspection form has 50 fields to complete. Generally, after a safety inspection is completed a paper copy is returned to the office where it is typically filed with some information entered into a back-office software. This paper-driven process is detrimental to your company's overall efficiency.

Paper safety inspections are significantly time consuming for every department involved. Technicians in the field must complete forms for every inspection by hand, then these forms are manually stored in filing cabinets or back-office software by the office team. Not to mention, paper forms are difficult for service managers to quickly review for errors, omissions, or follow-ups.

Why do errors happen? It takes a lot to maintain a consistent safety inspection process. Technicians must be trained on how to complete the inspections and the forms, and office staff needs to be able to review the paper forms and input the data. Inevitably, the process yields a significant margin for error.

Safety inspections should be reviewed to ensure that all best practice procedures are followed and documented properly. If any issues are identified during the safety inspection, they should be tracked for follow-up to correct any potential safety hazards. Without a process in place to provide real-time feedback of errors that technicians are making, those errors could potentially be made in perpetuity.

So, how can propane marketers maintain this important industry best practice without sacrificing efficiency or accuracy? Transition from a paper-driven safety inspection process to a mobile one.

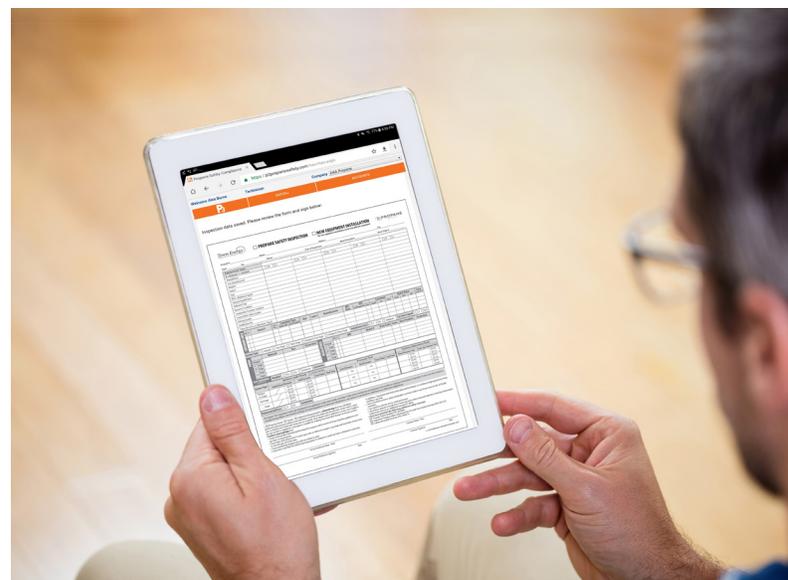
THE CASE FOR MOBILE SAFETY INSPECTIONS

Mobile safety inspections are completed on tablets, instead of by hand on paper. They utilize intuitive prompts and form field options to eliminate factors like illegible handwriting or missed form fields to create 100% accurate and complete safety inspections. This is a significant time-saver for technicians in the field. After a mobile safety inspection form is complete, a copy is automatically sent to the customer and another is sent and stored in an electronic database. Without paper forms, there is no need for office employees to dredge through cumbersome data entry, disorganized file cabinets, or time-consuming searches for archived documentation.

Mobile safety inspections increase efficiencies for service managers, too. Some platforms can automatically generate management reports. These reports can help identify important follow-ups and technician performance. Managers can use mobile safety inspections as a quantitative tool to evaluate technician performance and identify training needs. This offers a unique opportunity to provide feedback right away, proactively correct any errors, and prevent recurring issues.

EVALUATING YOUR COMPANY'S SAFETY INSPECTION & DOCUMENTATION PROCESS

Transitioning from a paper-driven safety inspection process to a mobile one is a major shift. It is important to make sure you are utilizing the best available technology formulated by propane safety



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experts. There are a lot of electronic systems available, but not all of them are equipped to store, retrieve, and analyze safety inspection data and other compliance documentation.

When you start looking for electronic safety documentation software, have these questions ready:

- Does my current back-office software have the ability to evaluate operating tests?
- Can field technicians use the mobile application service offline, without cellular data or Wi-Fi?
- Can I use the system to analyze critical operating tests, like leak checks, pressure tests, and flow and lock-up tests?
- Does the system have the ability to report on regulator replacements and cathodic protection inspections?

P3 Propane Safety is the industry standard for safety and compliance, and their P3 Mobile Safety Inspection Application Service has helped marketers make the switch. Now is the time to transition from paper to mobile in order to eliminate documentation errors, save time, increase efficiency, and reduce risk for your propane company.

Alex Burns is the Vice President of the P3 Compliance System division of P3 Propane Safety. Alex_Burns@p3propanesafety.com | p3propanesafety.com

