

GAS SAFETY Bulletin



Message from the Editor

Dear readers,

You will find in this issue of the Gas Safety Bulletin two special features on the voluntary recall of non-compliant gas appliances and the periodic safety inspection of central LPG installations so that you may know more about the subject. You will also find legal tips on gas safety, and information about the locations for installation of gas meters and emergency control valves. Gas incident and prosecution statistics by type from January to October 2011 is also provided for your easy reference. We hope you will enjoy the articles.

Latest News

We organised a briefing for importers of domestic gas appliances on 11 August 2011. Please visit the EMSD website below for the content and relevant documents of the briefing: http://www.emsd.gov.hk/emsd/eng/pps/gas_igt.shtml

Voluntary Recall of Gas Appliances Non-Compliant with Safety Requirements

To enhance the monitoring of both the quality and safety of approved domestic gas appliance models, EMSD samples gas appliances from the market on a regular basis for the Basic Safety Assessment Test to ensure compliance of the gas appliances with safety requirements.

In December 2010, EMSD purchased a cassette gas cooker from the market for the Basic Safety Assessment Test. According to the laboratory test report, the cassette gas cooker did not meet one of the safety requirements due to malfunctioning of the high pressure safety device, and thus failed the Basic Safety Assessment Test.

As the failed item could affect safety, EMSD immediately contacted the gas cooker importer for a meeting to discuss follow-up actions. According to the importer, the defective cassette gas cookers were in 4 batches, involving a total of 9,000 cookers. EMSD issued a notice to the importer to temporarily suspend the approval for the cassette gas cookers, requiring the importer to promptly notify the distributors to immediately stop selling the cassette gas cookers and to return the unsold stocks. The importer was also required to notify all the restaurants involved to stop using the defective cassette gas cookers at once. Meanwhile, EMSD stepped up the inspections of gas cooker outlets, restaurants and shops, and notified all basin meal providers in Hong Kong to stop using the cassette gas cookers of the batch numbers concerned.

In January and February 2011, samples of the cassette gas

cooker model in 3 different batches were again taken for the Basic Safety Assessment Test by EMSD and the gas cooker importer respectively. All the test results showed that the cassette gas cookers had again failed the high pressure safety device test.

As some of the cassette gas cookers with safety problems had already been sold, the gas cooker importer initiated with EMSD a full voluntary recall of the product. Before the recall, the importer was required to prepare a detailed "Handbook of Remedial Measures" and "Product Recall Notice". In the recall exercise, the importer arranged a free exchange of the recalled product for another approved cassette gas cooker.

The product recall commenced on 4 March 2011, when we announced the recall exercise to the public through an official press release and uploaded the Product Recall Notice onto the EMSD website. Meanwhile, the gas cooker importer also published the Product Recall Notice in Chinese and English newspapers as well as uploaded the notice onto the company's website.

While the product recall was in process, we closely monitored the development and progress of the recall and inspected the recalled products in the importer's warehouse. The importer was required to submit the product recall record to EMSD on a regular basis. So far, not received any complaints concerning the cassette gas cooker model since the commencement of the recall exercise.

Regular Gas Safety Checks for Central LPG Installations

Why conduct regular gas safety checks?

The main purpose of regular gas safety checks ("regular checks") is to ensure that domestic gas installations do not pose safety hazards to households and their neighbours. Regular checks ensure that the gas installations are operating safely. Regardless of whether the gas installations use town gas or LPG, the scope of the regular checks cover the gas piping, flexible gas tubing, cooking appliances, water heaters, etc. Registered LPG supply companies should conduct regular checks once every 18 months for domestic users to whom central liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) is supplied.



How are regular checks arranged?

Before carrying out a regular check, the LPG supply company or its registered gas contractor should inform the households in writing about the time of their visit to carry out the regular check, and display a prior notice about their visit prominently in the building lobby. If a householder has views or queries about the time of the regular check, he or she should take the initiative to contact the LPG supply company or registered gas contractor to arrange a more convenient time for the regular check.

All gas installers conducting the regular check should produce identification documents issued by the LPG supply company or the registered gas contractor. If a householder has queries about the identity of the gas installer, he or she should consult the property management company or LPG supply company.

What does the regular check cover?

The purpose of regular checks is to ensure that domestic LPG installations do not pose safety hazards to households and their neighbours. To this end, the regular check will mainly cover:

- Check whether there is leakage from the LPG piping on the domestic premises;
- Check whether the pressure of the domestic piping is normal and the LPG pressure regulator is working properly;
- Check whether the low pressure flexible gas tubing connecting the LPG piping and the gas appliances bears the approval mark, and check also the service life of the flexible gas tubing;




- Check whether the gas appliances, e.g. cooking stove or water heater, installed on the domestic premises are operating properly and are affixed with the logo approved by EMSD's Gas Authority (i.e. the "GU" mark); whether the exhaust (e.g. carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide) produced by the gas appliances during combustion can be ventilated outdoors properly to ensure that the user is not exposed to the risk of asphyxia due to lack of oxygen or carbon monoxide intoxication;
- Check whether the LPG installations on the domestic premises are equipped with valves or flexible gas tubings with excess flow protection for the prevention of explosion or other dangerous incidents resulting from excessive release of LPG, in case the flexible gas tubing is cut off by accident;
- Check the condition of the outdoor LPG piping, etc.

After carrying out the regular check, the registered gas contractor will provide the user with the relevant work record, including details of the regular check and the name and registration number of the gas installer, for future reference. The user should keep the relevant work record for arranging the next regular check and for protecting his or her rights.

What households should note

The purpose of regular check is to ensure the safety of domestic gas installations. To this end, every safety check programme will involve tens of thousands of LPG users, and the entire programme will take some time to complete. As such, we hope that all households will give their full cooperation by arranging for a safety check within the scheduled time as soon as possible, so that the entire programme may be completed smoothly.

In order to ensure that all gas installations of households in Hong Kong operate safely, EMSD has requested the relevant gas supply companies to provide data of their regular checks. If a household is found to have repeatedly refused to carry out regular checks or has not carried out regular checks for a prolonged period, EMSD will ask the gas supply company to refer the case to EMSD for follow-up. EMSD will then contact and explain to the household in question the importance of having regular checks, and request that household to proactively contact the gas supply company or its registered gas contractor to arrange for a regular check as soon as possible. 

Case Sharing

Regular Safety Inspection

A case involving a gas leak incident in a residential flat was recently referred to the Gas Standards Office by the Fire Services Department. After further investigation, it was found in the flat that the gas cooker and its flexible tubing were covered with grease and there were cracks on part of the tubing. The date on the tubing showed that it had long expired. It is believed that gas had leaked from the cracks of the tubing and accumulated inside the flat. The tenant of the flat said that he had been using the gas cooker and the flexible tubing for years and was not aware that the flexible tubing had expired. No safety inspection had been carried out for the gas installation.

According to regulation 31 of the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations (Cap 51C), no person shall use a gas appliance if at any time he knows or has reason to suspect that the gas appliance is unsafe due to such reasons as the insufficient supply of fresh air available for such appliance for proper combustion, removal of the products of combustion

is not being carried out by the exhaust system, gas escaping from the gas installation, or fault or maladjustment of part of the appliance.

To ensure the safe operation of gas appliances at all times, the owner of a gas appliance has the duty to arrange for registered gas contractors to conduct regular inspection of the gas installation (including gas cookers and other gas fittings) and maintenance according to the inspection results to ensure safety of the gas installation. Registered gas supply companies or gas distributors will normally arrange for registered gas installers to carry out regular inspection of gas installations for users at least once every 18 months. The list of registered gas contractors can be viewed on the EMSD website:

http://www.emsd.gov.hk/emsd/eng/pps/gas_reg.shtml



Gas Installations Soundness Test Conducted Unsafely

We would like to bring your attention to a recent court case that involved a registered gas installer who violated regulation 5(5) (i.e. "no person searching for an escape of gas from a gas fitting shall use any source of ignition") of the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations under the Gas Safety Ordinance. The gas installer involved was convicted and fined by the court.

Moreover, the Gas Authority was not satisfied with the conduct of the gas installer and took disciplinary action against the gas installer by suspending his registration in accordance with regulation 25(2)(a)(ii) of the Gas Safety (Registration of Gas Installers and Gas Contractors) Regulations.

Cutting off Gas Supply

According to the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations, if a registered gas installer employed by a gas supply company or a registered gas contractor knows or suspects, while installing, inspecting or maintaining a gas appliance (e.g. gas water heater or gas cooker etc), that:

- there is insufficient supply of air available for the gas appliance for proper combustion at the point of combustion;
- the removal of the products of combustion from the gas appliance is not being or cannot safely be carried out;
- the internal space is not adequately ventilated for the purpose of providing air containing sufficient oxygen for the persons present in the internal space while the gas appliance is in use;
- gas is escaping from the gas appliance or from its gas

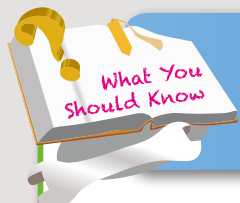
fitting;

- the gas appliance or its gas fitting is so faulty or maladjusted that it cannot be used without constituting a danger to any person or property;
- the gas appliance is a flueless gas water heater serving a bathroom or shower;

then he or she should, in so far as is reasonably practicable, take all measures immediately to carry out repair work to rectify the problem and stop the gas leakage. If repair is not reasonably practicable, the registered gas installer should cut off gas supply to the gas fitting immediately and attach a danger warning notice to the fitting or the gas valve from which the supply of gas has been cut off.



Legal Knowledge



Locations for Installing Gas Meters and Emergency Control Valves

It has been revealed during our recent inspections that some gas meters and emergency control valves have been installed in locations that are hard to reach by users, e.g. inside the false ceiling. This could obstruct safety inspection and maintenance of the gas installation and hinder users or emergency personnel from cutting off gas supply when an emergency such as a gas leak occurs, causing danger to public life and property.

We would like to remind registered gas contractors and registered gas installers to observe the relevant requirements of the Gas Safety Ordinance when installing gas meters and emergency controls, including:

Gas Meter

- No person shall install a gas meter in any common area which provides the only means of escape from the premises unless
 - (a) such meter is
 - (i) of fire-resisting construction; or
 - (ii) housed in a meter box with automatic self-closing doors and which is of fire-resisting construction; or
 - (b) the gas pipe immediately upstream of such meter or, where a pressure-regulator is adjacent to such meter, immediately upstream of that pressure-regulator, incorporates a device designed to cut off automatically the supply of gas if the temperature of the device is more than 95 degrees centigrade.
- There is no risk of damage to the gas meter from electrical apparatus, so far as is reasonably practicable.
- The gas meter is readily accessible for inspection and


Installing gas meters and emergency control valves inside a false ceiling can cause potential gas safety problems.



maintenance without the need for tools.

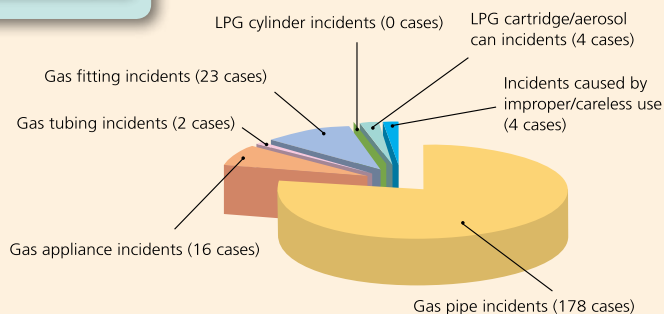
Emergency Control Valves

In the event of a gas accident, tenants should immediately shut off the emergency control valves if possible to cut off gas supply and stop the leaking of gas. Emergency control valves must therefore be installed on the premises and in accessible locations without having to rely on tools. The emergency control valves should be installed as near as is reasonably practicable to the point where the pipe through which gas is to be supplied enters the premises, so as to ensure more gas pipes on the premises are controlled by the emergency control valves, thus enhancing the safety of tenants.

Lastly, we would like to remind the trade again that gas meters and emergency controls should be installed according to the requirements of the Gas Safety Ordinance, otherwise it constitutes an offence. Should any enquiries or problems arise during the course of a safety inspection that might contravene the above requirements, please contact EMSD. 

Gas Statistics

Gas Incidents by Type in 2011 (January to October)



Gas Case Prosecutions by Type in 2011 (January to October)

