

## SAFETY ALERT

# Exposure to high concentrations of LPG

The purpose of this alert is to recommend that manufacturers, suppliers and distributors of LPG include information in their material safety data sheets (MSDSs) about the inherent dangers of liquid petroleum gas (LPG).

### Background

This alert follows a recent incident where an LPG leak asphyxiated an apprentice plumber/gas fitter. While working alone on the connection of a new gas installation, the plumber/gas fitter accidentally cut a live gas line, the leak filling the trench in which he was working with LPG. After becoming unconscious, he died from arrhythmia (disruption to the heart rhythm).

Specifically, the work involved tapping into an existing LPG reticulation system, inserting a T junction and running a gas line into a home. A hole had been dug to access the existing underground line and, while reaching head first into the hole to sever the line, the plumber/gasfitter was exposed to the LPG gas.

### Action required

Because they include advice on the health effects of substances, as well as exposure control and other safe work practices, MSDSs are recognised as authoritative sources of information in workplaces. This allows them to underpin risk management programs that control exposure to hazards, such as certain chemicals. Employers are dependent on these documents when they need to quickly identify such hazards.

For MSDSs that concern LPG, the NSW Coroner recommends that they include warnings about how exposure to high levels of the hazard can lead to asphyxiation and fatal arrhythmia. The two sections of MSDSs where such warnings should be included are Section 2, which is the hazards identification section, and Section 12, which is the toxicological information section.

### Further information

- Download the relevant NSW MSDS Code of Practice (2003) from the Safe Work Australia website – [safeworkaustralia.gov.au](http://safeworkaustralia.gov.au)
- Call WorkCover on 13 10 50 or visit [workcover.nsw.gov.au](http://workcover.nsw.gov.au)

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Information on the latest laws can be checked by visiting the NSW legislation website ([www.legislation.nsw.gov.au](http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au)).

This publication does not represent a comprehensive statement of the law as it applies to particular problems or to individuals or as a substitute for legal advice. You should seek independent legal advice if you need assistance on the application of the law to your situation.

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