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Welcome to Gasline, which is produced by Gas New Zealand.

Gasline is published regularly as part of the industry's efforts to encourage the direct use of natural gas and LPG into households and small businesses.

Using natural gas and LPG as a direct energy source offers numerous cost, environmental and energy efficiency benefits. Gas New Zealand hopes to educate consumers and policy makers about the many advantages of making wider use of this strategic energy asset.

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The Gas Hub is feeling better all over

Earlier in 2015 The Gas Hub unveiled an updated look and feel for its brand, with new imagery and a streamlined key message platform.

The Gas Hub, Powerco's natural gas consumer brand, provides the core business activity of natural gas connections. It interacts with a range of audiences from consumers to gasfitters to energy retailers.

"The aim was to consolidate a wealth of natural gas information gathered over previous years into consistent messaging that helps communicate natural gas benefits in a more powerful way," Gas Customer Commercial Manager Mark Hermann says.

"Research showed us that audiences want to know more about natural gas than just the emotive reasons for connecting. They are also looking for strong rational reasons to connect.

"With this in mind, the new imagery features real people communicating emotive messages – backed up by rational fact. Simplicity, consistency and flexibility are the key aspects of our overall approach."

An update to The Gas Hub's website (thegashub.co.nz), a new Better All Over magazine style publication and customer e-newsletter (Gas Connect) are among the initiatives introduced already.

"The updated website is an important communication and information platform which is able to be used by staff, consumers, trade and the wider gas industry," Mark says.

Growth of new gas connection numbers has been strong recently. Mark says this is attributed to the updated brand imagery and messaging, plus the subsequent initiatives introduced to the market.



An example of The Gas Hub's new branding.

Bright future ahead for LPG

It's a healthy time for the LPG industry, looking at the most recent sales statistics, says LPGA president Tony Smith.

"LPG has really come into its own in the last 12 months," says Tony.

164, 545 tonnes of LPG was sold from July 2014 to July 2015, which is up nearly 10,000 tonnes from the same period from 2013 – 2014.

"Pleasingly, all segments (except the auto segment) are showing strong resilience with overall growth for the period up 5.7% on the prior 12 months," Tony says.

"A cold consistent winter has obviously helped the industry in many areas, however customer number growth is supporting the 45kg sector and running total sales are up 6.5% over last year's."

The 9kg cylinder segment is also up 6.1% over the running total at the same time last year, and Tony says this is because residential consumers are coming to appreciate the flexibility of LPG.

"This occurs particularly in the autumn and spring, with many people using gas for barbecues and patio heaters, which is bumping up sales," he says.

New Zealand continues to remain domestically supplied – LPG nationally, and natural gas in the North Island – for now and the future, says Tony, and there is a well-established and robust distribution network in place to ensure customer satisfaction.

"Gas is well positioned to assist in transitioning New Zealand into a greener economy."

Gas safety campaign a hit

Over one million New Zealanders received important gas safety messages over the past few months, thanks to a highly successful online campaign.

The campaign was a partnership between the LPG Association, the Gas Association of NZ, WorkSafe NZ, the Environmental Protection Authority, and the Plumbers, Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board.

The campaign ran from July 5 – August 25 and focused on what to do when you smell gas, the importance of using a licenced gasfitter, cabinet heater safety and caravan safety tips. Included three short videos and three banner ads.

The videos featured on YouTube and Facebook, and the banner ads showed on Facebook, NZ Herald Online, Stuff, and a network which allows the purchase of advertisements on websites that are seen by "New Zealand eyeballs."

GSL Promotus Digital Connections staffer, Steve Dimakis, says the campaign numbers are extremely impressive.

"The primary success metric of the campaign was to get at least 215,000 people seeing a safety message three times – this is because by the third view, a person is likely to have retained the message," he says.

"The total number of overall exposures to the campaign material was 1.1 million, so the campaign has significantly over-performed against that primary goal."

Steve says the purpose of the campaign was to get the winter gas safety messages out to as many New Zealanders as possible.

"Previously, these messages were on tags around LPG bottles, which was great but meant that those not using LPG weren't aware of the importance of gas safety.

"So we focused on the creative and digital elements this year, and it's worked really well."

WorkSafe New Zealand Energy Safety manager Mark Wogan says he is really pleased with the success of the gas safety campaign.

"Getting these basic but very important gas safety messages to over 1 million New Zealanders is fantastic," he says.

"These messages will have helped remind people that we all need to respect gas as an energy source and use it properly to enjoy its benefits safely."



One of the banner advertisements included in the LPGA's gas safety campaign.

Smooth sailing for EGCC Scheme

Almost a year into the inclusion of 15kg+ LPG cylinder retailers in the Electricity and Gas Complaints Commissioner (EGCC) Scheme, Commissioner Judi Jones says all is running according to plan.

"Our job is to receive complaints, direct them to the right place, and investigate if needed – and it's working really well," says Ms Jones.

"Already LPG consumers have found their way to us with issues tending to be around delivery, billing, complaint handling, and a couple about contaminants – the kind of things you'd expect.

"Most complaints are being resolved directly with the company which is exactly what we want."

Ms Jones says the EGCC serves as a last resort if the complainant is still unhappy with the outcome of discussions with the company.

In total, to date the Scheme has received 3,682 queries, 2,812 complaints, and 417 deadlocked (unresolved) files across all gas and electricity sources.

"Since the Scheme expanded to cover LPG in cylinders over 15 kg in October 2014, we have received 28 queries, 26 complaints, and 3 deadlocked files about LPG in cylinders," Ms Jones says.

To put that into context, the EGCC received 2 queries, 5 complaints, and no deadlocked files about reticulated LPG, and 70 queries, 59 complaints, and 7 deadlocked files about reticulated natural gas, between 1 October 2014 and now.

"We're noticing more complaints about LPG in cylinders, than about reticulated gas," she says.

"The numbers aren't high, but LPG in cylinders is certainly getting a lot more activity, which is interesting – we're not sure why, but we will be looking into any systemic issues."

Ms Jones says communication with industry is also proving successful, and the recent annual member forum and induction showed EGCC member organisations are engaging and wanting to learn.

She says the half day induction is for people who are new to the Scheme, and involves taking them through the Scheme processes, and teaching about how to handle complaints well.

"This year's forum theme was value, and focussed on adding value to EGCC members' complaints processes, and helping them resolve complaints themselves.

"Our relationship with industry is certainly developing, which is great."



Electricity and Gas Complaints Commissioner, Judi Jones.

PGDB appoints new chief executive

The Plumbers, Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board's new chief executive is focused on delivering a "modern" approach to regulation that rewards those who comply with obligations, and provides a fair, risk-based disciplinary system.

Martin Sawyers, who has been in the job for twelve weeks, says he is really enjoying the challenges and change he has faced so far.

Improving the complaints and discipline process is one of his first major tasks, he says.

"The current cost of dealing with the lower level complaints is disproportionate to the risks associated with those complaints," he says.

"I explored ways of dealing with those lower level complaints without them needing to automatically go through an investigation process.

"We've now introduced a more streamlined process including warning letters and dispute resolution meetings, which mitigates cost, time and stress for all involved," he says.

Martin is also focusing on mitigating unauthorised gasfitting, plumbing and drainlaying work, which is not only a public health and safety, but is negatively affects those "honest" people in the industry, he says.

"Work being carried out by unauthorised practitioners takes work away from those who have taken the time and effort to become properly qualified," he says.

"We're looking to develop strategies that help deal with illegal operators within the industry."

Martin says he hopes to meet as many industry participants as possible over the months as he settles into the chief executive's role.

"I intend to interact with stakeholders as much as I possibly can," he says.

"I anticipate I will work closely with gasfitters and I'm sure I will meet quite a few, alongside forming strong relationships with gas industry bodies.

"Stakeholder engagement is key - the reality is that industries achieve a lot more when they collaborate and work together."

Martin's formal training is in law, and his governance experience includes a term as Mayor of Buller and eight years as chair of Buller Electricity Ltd.

Prior to his role with the PGDB, he has been manager of corporate services for the Real Estate Agents Authority and the Department of Corrections manager of legal operations.



New PGDB chief executive, Martin Sawyers.



We are always looking for stories from both the natural gas and LPG worlds, as well as the wider gas community.

If you have any story ideas for Gasline please email Daniel

