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## Update of standard paves the way for introduction of biomethane into existing gas pipeline network

The recent updating of the standard for reticulated natural gas by Standards New Zealand to allow for renewable gas to be injected into gas pipelines is a significant step towards New Zealand's transition to renewable gas, GasNZ chief executive Jeffrey Clarke says.

"With plans for the first injection of biomethane in New Zealand to begin in Reporoa later this year, the update of the 16-year-old standard is great news."

The revised standard (NZS 5442(Int):2024) supports the safe blending of biomethane within the reticulated, or piped, gas network.

The final and fully revised version of this standard, which will follow at a later date, is expected to additionally allow blending of hydrogen gas within the gas distribution network, an important step in New Zealand's adaptation towards more renewable energy sources, according to Standards New Zealand.

Biomethane is essentially the same as natural gas, but instead of coming from deep underground it comes from anaerobic digestion by micro-organisms breaking down organic matter in discarded food waste and farm waste (manure). This makes it a low-emission renewable gas.

Currently, much of New Zealand's biomethane is simply burnt away with the focus being on waste removal rather than energy supply. However, a study by Firstgas, engineering firm Beca, and Fonterra, found that 4 percent of the country's energy-related emissions could be avoided by using low-emitting, renewable alternatives such as biomethane.

Standards Development Manager Nick Ascroft at Standards New Zealand says that while many consumers are likely unaware of the type of gas running through their pipes, the changes the revised standard sets out have the potential to provide some clarity for installers and manufacturers in the industry and lead the way for more renewable energy sources.

"The standard plays a role in giving direction and safety assurance," he says.

Gas distributor Firstgas is working with Ecogas to inject the biomethane produced from the digestion of food waste at Ecogas's organics processing facility in Reporoa into Firstgas's reticulated gas network.

The first injection of biomethane is on track to begin this year.

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Further information:

Brian Langham  
Communications Manager  
GasNZ

021 784 626

[Brian.langham@gasnz.org.nz](mailto:Brian.langham@gasnz.org.nz)