

Church tower beacon guidance



Beacons are fuelled by Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), which is the generic term used to describe propane, butane, or mixtures of the two gases. It is a colourless liquid which readily evaporates into a gas and has no smell although an odour is added to help detect leaks.

LPG can be a hazard. Why...

LPG is extremely flammable and it readily combines with air to form an explosive mix. If this mix is exposed to an ignition source it can result in an explosion and intense fires.

It is heavier than air and will collect at the lowest levels of buildings and flow along the ground. It is supplied in pressurised steel cylinders which can explode if they are involved in a fire.

Safety precautions are essential when using any LPG appliances and there are a number of commonsense measures that can be followed to reduce risks.

Location of the beacon:

The beacon does not need to be located on a tower and there are significant hazards in doing so. Locating on a tower will bring the LPG cylinders into close proximity to the buildings, reduce the operational working area as well creating access/egress and working at height issues. It will also increase the potential for manual handling problems – remember suitable LPG cylinders can have a gross weight in excess of 40kg.

We strongly recommend that the beacon is located at ground level away from buildings.

Before the event

Plan, prepare and understand the event.

- Inform the emergency services of what you are planning. Write first aid and emergency procedures, including fire fighting and evacuation procedures. The HSE recommend that in the event of a fire you should evacuate the area and call the fire service, not attempt to tackle the fire yourself.
- Review and update existing risk assessments, particularly fire and manual handling assessments. Specific risk assessments should be created for the event.
- Identify key personnel to control and manage the event.

- Nominate suitably competent persons to assemble, install, operate, connect and disconnect appliances and regulators. It is critical that persons who have the responsibility for the use and storage of LPG understand the characteristics and hazards of the product. Consider training if necessary. Provide beacon manufacturer's instructions, ensure understanding and compliance. Only the propane cylinders designated by the equipment manufacturers must be used.
- Arrange for delivery of equipment as close to the start of the event as possible. LPG cylinders must be stored pre event at ground level in designated safe, secure, well ventilated areas away from occupied buildings and ignition sources and not inside the church.
- Create segregated public and non public operational areas.
- Consider weather forecasts and wind direction.
- Check assembled beacon for leaks using equipment provided. Never use a naked flame to look for leaks.

During the event

- The beacon must be located on a level, non combustible surface, suitably fixed by the supplied brackets or sandbags draped over the legs, at least 2 metres from surrounding buildings or structures, which must also be non combustible. If locating on a tower or other part of the church you will need to seek the advice of the church architect/surveyor and may need to obtain a faculty.
Within the operational area all combustible and heat vulnerable materials must be removed and all possible ignition sources other than the beacon equipment identified and eliminated.
- The beacon must only be lit and extinguished by competent persons and must be supervised at all time when lit.
- If the beacon is positioned above ground level no more than 2 persons must be in the vicinity.
- Empty cylinders should be treated in the same manner as full ones.

After the event

- Turn off and extinguish the equipment following manufacturer's instructions.
- After the event a fire watch must be maintained for a period of at least 60 minutes.
- Tidy up and remove refuse and debris, return the LPG cylinders to designated storage area and arrange for collection as soon as possible.

* Please note this list is not exhaustive

Need to contact us?

For further advice Ecclesiastical customers can call our Risk Management Advice Line on **0345 600 7531** (Monday to Friday 09:00 to 17:00, excluding Bank Holidays) or email us at **risk.advice@ecclesiastical.com** and one of our experts will call you back within 24 hours.

This guidance is provided for information purposes and is general and educational in nature and does not constitute legal advice. You are free to choose whether or not to use it and it should not be considered a substitute for seeking professional help in specific circumstances. Accordingly, Ecclesiastical Insurance Office plc and its subsidiaries shall not be liable for any losses, damages, charges or expenses, whether direct, indirect, or consequential and howsoever arising, that you suffer or incur as a result of or in connection with your use or reliance on the information provided in this guidance except for those which cannot be excluded by law. Where this guidance contains links to other sites and resources provided by third parties, these links are provided for your information only. Ecclesiastical is not responsible for the contents of those sites or resources. You acknowledge that over time the information provided in this guidance may become out of date and may not constitute best market practice.

Ecclesiastical Insurance Office plc (EIO) Reg. No.24869 is registered in England at Beaufort House, Brunswick Road, Gloucester, GL11JZ, UK and is authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority.

©Ecclesiastical Insurance Office plc 2018

PD3029 1 11/18