



Propane

Propane is the gas we use to fuel our backyard grills. It is a lot like natural gas—you cannot see it, smell it, or taste it, but you can burn it to produce heat energy.

Propane has been around for millions of years, but no one knew it. It is buried underground in **sedimentary rocks** with natural gas and petroleum.

Propane wasn't discovered until 1912. The scientists knew they had found a good, new energy source. One year later, people were using it to heat their homes.

Propane Is a Fossil Fuel

Propane is a **fossil fuel**. It was formed hundreds of millions of years ago, long before the dinosaurs. Like oil and natural gas, it was formed from tiny sea animals and plants.

The plants got their energy from the sun. This is the energy in propane. Propane's energy came from the sun.

Propane is mixed with natural gas and petroleum when it comes from the ground. It is separated out at natural gas processing plants and oil refineries.

Propane Is Nonrenewable

The propane we burn today was made a long time ago. It took hundreds of millions of years to form. We can't make more propane in a short time. It is a **nonrenewable** source of energy.

We get propane from **petroleum** and **natural gas**. Our supply of propane depends on our supply of these other fossil fuels.



Pipelines are used to transport propane and natural gas to a processing facility.

Propane Is Portable

When propane comes out of the ground, it is a gas. But when it is put under pressure, it becomes a liquid. A lot more liquid can be put into a tank than gas. Liquid propane has 270 times more energy than propane as a gas! If a tank of propane gas lasted a day, the same sized tank of liquid propane would last 270 days – almost a year.

Liquid propane is portable – that means it is easy to move from place to place. We use small tanks of liquid propane for our barbecue grills and on recreational vehicles. Some vehicles at airports, like the powerful tugs that push jets and the vehicles moving baggage, also use propane.

We Use Propane Every Day

Many farms in the United States use propane to dry crops, run tractors, and heat barns. Businesses use propane for heating and cooking. Most of the carts and vehicles that we drive inside buildings use propane for fuel. It is a clean-burning fuel.

Some cars and buses use propane for fuel. It is a very clean fuel. It doesn't pollute the air like gasoline. However, engines must be changed to use propane, and that is expensive.

Some people in the country don't have natural gas pipelines near their homes. They use propane instead. They put big propane tanks outside their houses. Delivery trucks bring the propane right to their houses.



A propane grill.



Photo courtesy of Adobe Stock/ Henry Saint John
This forklift is fueled by propane.



Photo courtesy of Adobe Stock/Muchtar
Propane is stored in a large tank. It is used to provide energy for heating, cooking, and drying clothes.