



marketing mix

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Stay in touch with the trades

RESIDENTIAL PROPANE VERSUS ELECTRIC USAGE DEPENDS ON IT

Homebuilders, remodelers, renovators and associated building trades continue to be major influencers in developing residential propane load. Add heating and cooling wholesalers, construction equipment rental businesses and appliance retailers to that list of important people with whom propane retailers need to *stay in touch*.

Staying in touch with builders means becoming their business friends and valued subcontractors on their building projects. Some builders specialize in home renovation and remodeling and should have your attention too.

When you provide good service to a builder, they are likely to connect you to their building clients and also recommend you to the other builders in your area. Good service means bringing propane service to their projects when and where they need it.

When you have that type of relationship with builders, they will listen to you about the diverse uses of propane available for the construction process and propane applications to incorporate into their finished projects. You will be the go-to energy provider in your part of propane country.

► PROPANE APPLICATIONS

Make sure that propane is in the hunt for the five major energy applications in the home.

1. Space heating: Be prepared to take your builders and the other building trades to school on the advantages of

a high efficiency propane furnace or boiler over an electric heat pump for heating the home.

At minimum, talk with your builder about the advantages of propane partnering with the electric heat pump so that the cooling is handled by the electric heat pump and most of the heating is done with propane. Emphasize that propane can be a good partner with heat pumps for year-round comfort, instead of just a backup to the heat pump. You can also retrofit the Heat Pump Helper on existing all-electric heat pumps to gain the many advantages of gas heating (see page 30).

According to the most recent Residential Energy Consumption Survey (RECS), an average of 42 percent of residential energy consumption is for space heating. Make propane space heating a No. 1 talking point when *staying in touch* with builders and heating and cooling contractors.

2. Water heating: Typically, the second biggest energy consumer in the home is water heating. Propane has lots of advantages over electric for water heating, but some builders and plumbers may need to be coached to change their electric habits. Show builders, and other contractors involved with water heating choices, the operating cost savings, space savings, increased hot water production and environmental benefits of heating water with storage tank or tankless propane water heaters instead of electric models. If you are *staying in touch* with builders and plumbing contractors, it should be easy to convince them that propane water heaters are always the best choice.

3. Cooking: Gas cooking has gotten some bad press on indoor air quality.

Communicate with builders about the real story that all kitchen cooking can be harmful to indoor air quality, no matter what form of energy is used to cook the food. Proper kitchen ventilation, usually required by local building codes, is the simple answer to healthy indoor air quality, whether you are cooking with propane or electricity. Protect energy choice in the kitchen by *staying in touch* with your builders and plumbing contractors. Tell them cooking with gas is delicious.

4. Laundry: In the past, propane dominated the laundry room, with propane clothes dryers and propane water heaters providing hot water for the washers. Now, too often, you see an all-electric laundry room, and part of the reason is we have not been *staying in touch* with builders and plumbing contractors about the advantages of drying clothes with propane instead of an all-electric dryer. Faster drying time, fluffier clothes and cost savings are some of the benefits often attributed to propane clothes dryers over electric models.

5. Hearth: A propane gas log or fireplace is usually an easy sale over electric versions, but *staying in touch* with builders about the latest gas fireplace technology is important for maintaining dominance in hearth applications.

We outlined discussion points for the five primary indoor uses of propane, and *staying in touch* with builders about the many outdoor uses of propane can be just as important. After all, we want to keep energy choices for the home eclectic, not all-electric. **LPG**

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