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LPG Patio Heaters – Safe Use

Outdoor radiant patio heaters using an LPG cylinder are popular, both for commercial and domestic use. This Guidance sets out some basic safety rules which should be observed by users.

- Patio heaters are for outdoor use only. The combustion products leaving the heater are very hot. On no account should they be used in an enclosed space, or inside a tent or marquee or close to umbrellas.
- They may only be used under awnings or canopies if the manufacturer's instructions permit it. Awnings or canopies should not impede the escape of combustion products.
- Care is needed when positioning a heater near terraces or balconies to ensure the products of combustion do not adversely affect people or property at burner level.
- Heaters should not be moved when alight.
- Heaters should be positioned in areas shielded from the wind.
- If a free-standing heater appears unstable in a high wind, the gas should be turned off at the cylinder valve, the cylinder should be disconnected and removed, and the heater moved to a position out of the wind.
- Assembly of heaters shall be carried out by a competent person in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and the assembly shall then be tested before use to ensure it is gas-tight and operates correctly.
- The LPG cylinder to be used should be of the correct type for the heater, i.e. either propane or butane and of a size as specified in the manufacturer's instructions.
- The gas pressure and type should be specified in the manufacturer's instructions (normally 28 mbar butane or 37 mbar propane). An appropriate regulator to; BS EN 12864 or BS EN 16129, shall be fitted using hose to BS EN 16436-1 Class 2 and suitable clips (see Liquid Gas UK Consumer Guidance Sheet CGS 17 - Use of clips to secure vapour phase LPG hose and tubing). Your local LPG dealer will be able to give advice.
- Heaters should be regularly serviced by a competent person in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions, particularly prior to the start of a new season.

It is a legal requirement for heaters supplied by landlords for use at their premises to have heaters checked for safety at intervals not exceeding 12 months and this must be carried out by a Gas Safe registered installer under the Gas safety (Installation and Use) Regulations.

The term 'Landlord' is widely defined. If in doubt refer to the Regulations, or the Guidance both of which are available from HSE Books.

- The condition of the flexible hose connecting the regulator to heater inlet should be checked each time the cylinder is replaced. If it shows signs of cracking, splitting or other deterioration, it should be exchanged for new hose manufactured to BS EN 16436-1 Class 2.
- LPG is odourised to enable accidental releases to be detected by smell. If a persistent gas smell is present, the heater should not be used, or if alight, the gas supply should be turned off at the cylinder valve. The cause should be investigated and rectified before the heater is again used.

Changing the Cylinder

- Always change cylinders in accordance with the gas supplier's instructions.
- Make sure the cylinder valve is shut before attempting to disconnect it and that there are no ignition sources nearby e.g. lit barbecues, candles, flame lamps, whilst the changeover takes place.
- Ensure the replacement cylinder is of the correct type. If it is a butane cylinder it will probably have a clip-on or snap-on valve which must be compatible with the regulator connector. If it is a propane cylinder the connection will be either screw or clip-on ('patio gas' cylinders), remember screw connections are LEFT-HAND. Undo it clockwise and use a correct spanner.
- Make sure that any hand valve on the cylinder to be replaced is closed before removing the regulator.
- Make sure that any hand valve on the replacement cylinder is closed (turned fully clockwise) before removing the plastic plug or cap.
- Tighten screwed connections (anti-clockwise) with the correct spanner.
- Test the joint with soap solution or a proprietary leak detection fluid and ensure the joint is leak-tight before lighting the heater.
- Replace the plastic plug or cap on the empty cylinder and store safely prior to exchange.

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