



**Boulder
County**

**Boulder County
Land Use Department
Publications**

LPG Tank Locations

Land Use Department
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Monday – Friday 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM

Building Permits can be applied for
and issued until 4:00 PM

LPG Tank Locations

Per the 2006 IFC Section 3804.

Propane Tanks

Propane tanks can be a real hazard to firefighters and homeowners alike during a fire. Tanks can easily be heated by radiant energy from a burning house or vegetation. Generally, as the tank begins to pressurize from the heat, it will begin by venting excess propane into the atmosphere through a valve in the top of the tank. This can cause a dramatic “torch” effect from the tank. More serious, though, is the possibility of tank over-pressurizing, causing a rupture. This usually occurs when the tank is nearly empty and there is more gas than liquid in the tank. The valve may no longer function in this case, and a dramatic depressurization may occur (i.e. an explosion). For these reasons, propane tanks (and other kinds of pressurized tanks) must be treated with special care in areas subject to periodic wildfires.

Propane Tank Installation

When installing a propane tank on your mountain property, remember the following:

- Flammable fuel tanks must be at least 50 feet from a fire cistern or other emergency water supply.
- Propane tanks must be installed at least 15 feet from the house (within defensible space Zone 2).
- They should be installed at the same elevation as the house. Since propane is heavier than air, if a leak in a propane fuel system occurs, the gas will have a tendency to sink. If the tank is above the house, it could allow leaking gas into the structure.
- Propane tanks are generally set on a concrete pad for proper support. If the concrete is limited to small pads under the feet of the tank, you should surround the rest of the tank with crushed rock or gravel (similar to the rock treatment for Zone 1A).
- Keep combustible materials away from propane tanks. Don't stack firewood or scrap lumber near the tank.
- Don't put the tank directly underneath a tree. Keeping the tank in the shade zone of trees is fine, but don't allow tree branches to overhang the tank. Vegetation within 15 feet of the tank must be kept cleared.
- If screening the tank from view is desired, try to utilize a natural feature, such as a rock outcrop. Wood fencing around the tank is a bad idea; try a dry stacked rock or block wall instead. Deciduous shrubs or small trees (such as aspen) may be used as screening, as long as they are kept 15' away from the tank. Do not use highly flammable shrubs (like juniper bushes) as screening!
- If you are purchasing a propane tank (as opposed to leasing), consider an underground unit. While there are some additional costs associated with such buried tanks, they are preferable to above ground tanks in high wildfire hazard areas, since they won't be exposed to radiant heating from a fire like above ground tanks would be. They also stay cooler and aren't as visible on a day-to-day basis.



Example of a proper propane tank installation.



Example of a poorly maintained propane tank pad area.