

SB 1280 (Laird): Single-use Propane Cylinders

Building the Network



Tens of millions of single-use 1 lb. propane cylinders are sold in North America every year and often end up improperly disposed due to a lack of convenient recycling options.

Every year in North America, an estimated 40-70MM single-use 1 lb. propane cylinders are sold, with over 10% (4-7MM) in California alone. Because of limited, expensive recycling options, the empty cylinders are often disposed of improperly in landfills, dumpsters, household trash, campsites, along the roadside, and in recycling containers.

There are other options for single-use 1 lb. propane cylinders, namely California's rapidly growing number of refilling and exchange locations for refillable/reusable 1 lb. propane cylinders.

California has a rapidly growing network of refilling and exchange locations for refillable/reusable 1 lb. propane cylinders. While this infrastructure continues to grow, the availability of wasteful single-use cylinders hinders that growth. Consumers want convenience and now have available to them, thanks to the growth of the refilling and exchange locations for refillable/reusable 1 lb. propane cylinders, many choices when it comes to purchasing, exchanging, and refilling their existing 1 lb. propane cylinder (see the map on the second page of this document). Convenience is key, and we're giving consumers exactly what they want: reusable product options and the ability to exchange or refill their own reusable cylinders.

Of all the propane gas cylinder sizes, only 1 lb. propane cylinders are available as single-use products. Some consumers currently refill their own single-use 1 lb. cylinders from a 20 lb. barbeque tank, although it is not safe to do so as injuries – and deaths – are widely reported. While the single-use 1 lb. cylinders are not designed to be refilled, the refillable/reusable cylinders are and are designed to be refilled safely.

As consumers ask for more reusable options, we expect production of reusable 1 lb. propane cylinders to grow. Current manufacturer capacity for refillable/reusable 1 lb. cylinders stands at more than 1MM units per year, although we anticipate that California will require no more than 400,000 each year (starting in Year 6, based on a ten year timeframe, the expected life of each refillable/reusable cylinder). Since we are phasing out the single-use cylinders in 5 years, an expected 800,000 cylinders per year will need to be produced in Years 1-5. We expect the excess production capacity starting in Year 6 to be absorbed by demand that is sure to grow in neighboring states.

Single-use 1 lb. propane cylinders pose fire and safety risks when improperly disposed or refilled.

Single-use cylinders can be dangerous to both personnel and equipment when disposed of improperly in the solid waste stream. When “empty”, single-use cylinders often still contain a small amount of gas, posing a danger to sanitation workers due to the risk of explosions and resulting fires. Also, they are not designed to be safely refilled. Consumers have been critically injured and killed as a result of refilling activities. Because of the dangers involved, the single-use cylinders must be disposed of properly, which can cost millions of dollars annually to local governments in California.

The map below shows the current options available to consumers for the purpose of purchasing, refilling, and exchanging reusable 1 lb. propane cylinders. To view this interactive map or to learn more about reusable 1 lb. propane cylinders, please visit www.refuelyourfun.org.

