

Improper use of portable water heaters

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What happened?

The Petroleum and Gas Inspectorate recent carried out a series of inspections of caravans and commercial catering vehicles following complaints about the location and use of portable gas water heaters.

Our inspections identified a number of caravans and commercial catering vehicles that had either had a portable water heater installed within the vehicle or located inappropriately outside the caravan / vehicle, contravening manufacturer's instructions for outdoor use.

In Queensland, the Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Act 2004 (the Act) requires that the supply, installation and use of gas devices (and fittings) must be approved.

Approved appliances carry a label identifying the approving body and the relevant approval number and appliances should also be accompanied by manufacturer's instructions on safe use. These types of gas appliances are specifically approved for outdoor use only and come with appropriate safety warning signs.

Key issues

- Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colourless, odourless gas undetectable by humans and can result in fatal consequences and may cause death.

- Portable gas appliances should not be operated in enclosed vehicles or poorly ventilated areas (small sheds, tents, compartments etc).

- These types of gas appliances are specifically approved for outdoor use only and come with appropriate safety warning signs.
- Only use in well ventilated areas as detailed in manufactures instructions.

- The lack of ventilation can lead to an accumulation of dangerous concentration levels of carbon monoxide gas produced by the gas burning process.
- Portable water heaters (and all outdoor gas appliances) come with appropriate safety warning signs.

Recommendations

When purchasing a caravan, campervan or recreational vehicle, ensure that the gas appliances have been:

- Approved (look for the Australian approving authority approval label on gas device/appliances)

If the caravan, campervan or recreational vehicle has a gas system installed, ensure that a gas system compliance certificate has been:

- Issued by a current Queensland gas licence holder

Caravan manufacturers or suppliers who provide a portable water heater to customers must ensure:

- The manufacturer's instructions are adhered to with the relevant manufactures instructions provided to the owner.





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