

Times Argus

This is a printer friendly version of an article from www.timesargus.com
To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

[Back](#)

Article published Dec 18, 2011

Fuel advice: Get a gauge and check it twice

By [Daniel Staples](#)

Staff Writer

BARRE — Concern for residents who are forced to pay service charges when they run out of propane for heating has spurred Barre Mayor Thomas Lauzon into action.

Lauzon has began a campaign to make sure propane customers stay warm and avoid charges associated with refueling an empty propane tank.

As cold weather sets in, propane users are reminded to check their tanks.

Matt Cota, executive director of the Vermont Fuel Dealers Association, has advice for customers: "Don't call when it's empty. Call when it's a quarter full."

Cota said every propane tank should have a gauge and that customers whose tank doesn't have one should call their dealers and get one installed. Cota said that in most cases delivery companies own the tanks and are happy to install a gauge.

Lauzon and Cota have been working together to try to keep those heating with propane from potentially paying hundreds of dollars in service fees if they run out.

Cota said the National Fuel Gas Code requires a system leakage check after any service interruption. Most companies also restart all of the appliances after the leakage test as an added measure of safety and consumer service since the certified technician already is at the premises.

Cota said when customers make sure to order propane in a timely manner it works best for the customer and dealer alike.

Most companies have regular schedules and routes, and planning ahead is the best way to avoid service charges for emergency deliveries outside regular routes, Cota said.

Cota said dealers are forced to impose the service charges because they simply could not absorb the costs associated with run-out deliveries and stay competitive.

He said another way to avoid run-out service charges is to enroll in an automatic delivery program, because then the dealer is responsible for making sure the customer has fuel.
