

# Media statement

Queensland Mines and Energy

8 July 2009

## Portable gas fridge danger sparks safety warning

Campers and holiday makers are being urged to be mindful of the dangers associated with the incorrect use of portable gas fridges and other portable outdoor appliances.

Queensland's Chief Gas Inspector Stephen Matheson said today portable gas fridges could be dangerous if they are used in confined spaces.

"Tents, vehicles and caravans with no ventilation are danger zones for portable gas fridges," he said.

"The Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation's Petroleum and Gas Inspectorate has issued a specific Safety Alert urging campers and holiday-makers to read the warning signs on appliances before use.

"The warning applies to portable gas refrigerators, as well as gas barbecues and portable gas heaters," he said.

Mr Matheson there had been two fatalities in Queensland since 2007 associated with portable gas fridges; one recently in Allora on the Darling Downs and another at Bilyana near Tully in 2007.

"The cause of death in each case resulted from carbon monoxide poisoning.

"In both instances, a gas-powered outdoor portable refrigerator was used in an enclosed vehicle (one being a station wagon, the other a fully enclosed van with minimal ventilation).

"Following the Tully incident, the Petroleum and Gas Inspectorate issued a direction that required suppliers to fit additional safety warnings with greater visibility on portable gas fridges.

"While these fridges are very convenient, people should be more aware of the risks of operating them outside their intended use or specifications."

Many portable fridge units use three-way operating systems (12 volt, 240 volt and LPG) and look like eskies.

The point of difference is that portable fridges are not intended for gas operation in confined spaces because they can generate high concentrations of carbon monoxide gas which can be lethal.

Carbon monoxide is colourless, odourless and can result in death when inhaled in relatively small concentrations.

"People don't realise that using portable gas appliances in enclosed spaces such as vehicles, motor homes, caravans, marine vessels and tents can lead to tragedy," Mr Matheson said.

"Queenslanders need to be aware that outdoor appliances are strictly for use outdoors and that inappropriate use can seriously compromise their safety," he said.

Further information about gas safety is available on the Queensland Mines and Energy website at:  
[www.dme.qld.gov.au/mines/gas\\_safety](http://www.dme.qld.gov.au/mines/gas_safety)

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