

No-rust LPG Tanks

Lite Cylinder fits well, but Ragasco is best.

Unlike aluminum or steel tanks, the relatively new, clear composite propane tanks allow users to see how much fuel remains, a nice feature when you're cruising. In June 2008, *Practical Sailor* evaluated a 9-kilogram Ragasco one-piece blow-molded tank made in Norway (\$100). After one year of exposure to the weather and sun, it is holding up well.

Recently, *PS* got the chance to evaluate a two-piece composite tank made in Franklin, Tenn. by the Lite Cylinder Co. The Lite Cylinder's dimensions are nearly identical to the Ragasco (12.5 inches in diameter and 18 inches high for a 9-kilogram tank), and like the Ragasco, it might not fit in some propane lockers designed for metal tanks. The price is about the same as well.

The U.S. Department of Transportation and Transport Canada give the Lite Cylinder a rated lifespan of 15 years, but the tank needs to be inspected and recertified every five years. *PS* noted that the serial number and inspection due-date stickers easily pulled off the Lite Cylinder we looked at.

In fire tests, composite tanks melt rather than "explode" like metal tanks. However, this does not necessarily mean they are safer, in our opinion. About 5,000 similar 33-pound composite tanks made by Lite Cylinder were recalled in 2007 when they ruptured at a storage facility in Miami, Fla. Lite Cylinder's current tanks have gone through extensive testing and passed the approval process, and there are no other pending recalls that *PS* is aware of.

Bottom line: If you have good-quality aluminum tanks that are up to date on inspections, there is no pressing need to switch to a composite tank. If you're switching from corrosion-prone steel, and like the idea of a composite tank, the one-piece Ragasco tank is worth the extra price. ▲



ABYC Offers Strict Rules for Safe Installation of LPG Systems

The American Boat and Yacht Council has some very specific standards for marine liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) systems, and for good reason. Everything—including the types of hoses, tanks, shutoff valves, and safety elements—is covered in Section A of the ABYC Technical Bulletin for Small Craft (www.abycinc.org).

Marine stores charge an arm and a leg to get the appropriate fittings for a safe propane system, but with the help of a knowledgeable propane dealer, you can devise your own safe system at about half the cost. We covered this topic a while back, and that article "The Complete Propane Appliance System" is online at www.practical-sailor.com/tools/propane_appliances_on_sailboats.html.

The illustration below, adapted from one in Charlie Wing's excellent illustrated book "How Boat Things Work," shows the key elements of a well-designed propane system.

Common problems we see in used boats: corroded regulators, lack of a pressure gauge, clogged propane locker drains, propane lockers that aren't air-tight, overboard drains that are below the waterline on a heel, overboard drain hoses with low spots where gas can collect, a valve or union in the fuel line where it runs through the cabin, tanks without shutoff solenoids near the stove, and burners without flame failure devices, which shut off gas to a burner should the flame extinguish.

PROPER INSTALLATION

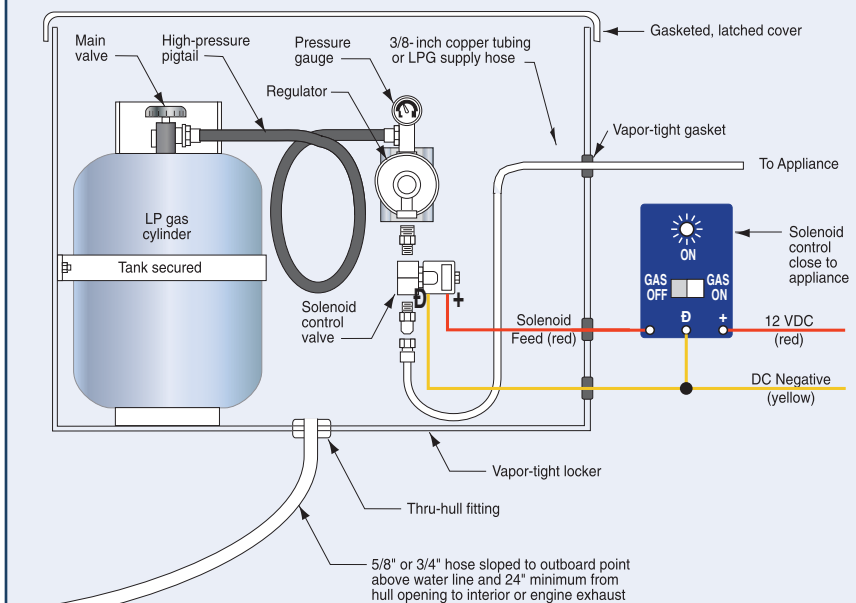


Illustration adapted from Charlie Wing's "How Boat Things Work"

CONTACTS

LITE CYLINDER, 866/412-5483
www.litecylinder.com

RAGASCO, 561/478-5235
www.ragasco.com