



eFAX Report

News Briefs

• **OSHA Ergonomics plan delayed.** It now appears a new plan to reduce ergonomic injuries in the workplace won't be released until mid-April. The Occupational Safety and Health Admin. (OSHA) had been expected to unveil its new rules and guidelines last week to coincide with Labor Secretary Elaine Chao's scheduled testimony, March 15, before the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. The meeting at which Secretary Chao was to have testified was cancelled, however.

• **The return of El Nino?** A four-degree rise in water temperatures near South America last month suggests that El Nino—the warming of the Pacific Ocean along the Equator near the International Date Line—is developing again, according to a weather update delivered March 7 by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Admin. For the U.S., El Nino typically means more rain and snow in the southern tier and warmer winter temperatures in the Great Plains and Pacific Northwest. El Nino occurs every 4 to 5 years and can last up to 18 months but is very difficult to predict. Meteorologists now say there is a 50 percent chance of El Nino conditions developing by mid-2002.

“Leading the Way Through Involvement”

Stimulus bill provides immediate tax benefit to NPGA members

After months of partisan gridlock, President Bush signed into law on March 9, 2002, an economic stimulus bill that the House and Senate had passed only days before. The *Job Creation and Worker Assistance Act*, as the stimulus bill is named, contains two very important provisions that NPGA lobbied for on behalf of its membership:

- The first provision allows businesses to take a 30 percent depreciation deduction for new business equipment in the first year of purchase. The provision applies to qualified property and equipment acquired after Sept. 10, 2001, and before Sept. 11, 2004. With some exceptions, the property must be placed in service by Jan. 1, 2005. In effect, this provision allows NPGA members to take 30 percent bonus depreciation on such capital expenditures as the purchase of propane storage tanks and after-market retrofit and other equipment.

- In addition, Congress extended for two more years the tax deduction allowed under current law for qualified clean-fuel vehicles and clean-fuel vehicle refueling property. The vehicle deduction was to have been reduced in 2002 and phased out entirely by the end of 2004. The stimulus bill extends the maximum allowable deduction for two more years. For trucks with a gross vehicle weight (gvw) above 26,000 pounds, the maximum

deduction is \$50,000; for trucks with a gvw between 10,000-26,000 pounds, the maximum deduction is \$5,000. Thus, NPGA members can continue to take the maximum deduction toward the purchase of propane-fueled bobtails for 2002 and 2003.

More information about the *Job Creation and Worker Assistance Act* can be found at on NPGA's web site, www.npga.org. NPGA recommends that members also consult with their attorneys or accountants about the tax benefits that may be available to them under the new law.

No change in hazmat registration fee this year

Final action on a proposal to temporarily lower the registration fees paid by hazmat carriers and shippers has again been delayed, the U.S. Dept. of Transportation (DOT) announced last week (*Federal Register*, March 14, 2002). The DOT's Research and Special Programs Admin. (RSPA) said it was delaying action for a second time pending enactment of the DOT's fiscal year 2003 appropriations. Thus, for registration year 2002-2003, which begins July 1, the

(Continued on page 2)

PERC announces launch of local, national advertising campaign for 2002

The multi-million-dollar advertising campaign approved by the **Propane Education & Research Council** last December kicks off this month. The campaign targets the important homeowner audience and encompasses both national and local advertising. Nationwide, the campaign includes commercials on cable and satellite television channels (A&E, HGTV, The Discovery Channel, the Learning Channel, and the Do-It-Yourself Network, for example) and print ads in such publications as *Southern Living*, *Country Living*, and *Country Home*.

The national TV spots will run during March, May, Sept., and Nov., while the national print ads will be appearing from April through Dec.

Local ads begin today!

A new component of the Council's Consumer Education Plan this year is the local media market initiative, which targets 22 markets. Beginning today, March 18, and continuing through May and then again from September through November, propane ads will run on local radio and TV radio stations in the selected markets, which were chosen based on such criteria as population, market

**The 22 local media markets are (1) Burlington, Vt.-Plattsburgh, N.Y.; (2) Columbia, S.C.; (3) Des Moines-Ames, Iowa; (4) Evansville, Ind.; (5) Fresno-Visalia, Calif.; (6) Green Bay-Appleton, Wis.; (7) Huntsville-Decatur (Florence), Ala.; (8) Jackson, Miss.; (9) Lexington, Ky.; (10) Lincoln and Hastings-Kearny, Neb.; (11) Little Rock-Pine Bluff, Ark.; (12) Madison, Wis.; (13) Missoula, Mont.; (14) Paducah, Ky.-Cape Girardeau, Mo.-Harrisburg-Mt. Vernon, Ill.; (15) Portland-Auburn, Maine; (16) Roanoke-Lynchburg, Va.; (17) Savannah, Ga.; (18) Spokane, Wash.; (19) Springfield, Mo.; (20) Tulsa, Okla.; (21) Waco-Temple-Bryan, Tex.; and (22) Wichita-Hutchinson, Kans.*

Ad kit supplement

Available from the Council is a *2002 Advertising Kit Supplement*, which contains new print ads, more information on how to advertise effectively, and answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs). In particular, these FAQs address how to make the best use of the kit and how to get involved with the Council's *Partnership with States* program.

For information about the kit supplement, visit the Council's web site at www.propanecouncil.org (click on "Propane Industry").

potential, and competitive price of propane vs. electricity.*

The TV ads are concentrated on morning, evening, and late night news programming on major network affiliates. Radio stations were selected based on their popularity with homeowners and include stations with country, news, and adult contemporary formats.

PROPANE
EXCEPTIONAL ENERGY™

No change...

(Continued from page 1)

registration fees remain \$300 for small businesses and \$2,000 for all other registrants. (A \$25 processing fee is included.)

In December 2000, RSPA proposed reducing the registration fees for six-years to eliminate a surplus in the Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness grants fund. For smaller companies, the fee would have been reduced to \$250, plus the \$25 processing fee; for larger companies, it would have been reduced to \$475, plus \$25 for processing.

NPGA opposed RSPA's proposal because, first, it provided disproportionate relief to large companies versus small ones; second, it did nothing to reverse DOT's earlier decision to broaden the universe of affected companies to include all placarded loads; and third, it would have extended the lower, preferential fee to rural electric co-ops as non-profit organizations.

NPGA will continue to work individually and with other organizations to permanently reduce this fee burden on propane marketers.

Volunteers welcome for industry booth at hearth products show

Propane marketers are invited to help staff the propane industry booth at next month's Hearth and Home Expo, April 11-13, in Anaheim, Calif. Volunteers receive free admittance to the show and will assist with promotional activities and serve as industry experts on propane. Call **Rita Pecilunas**, Strategic Marketing Services, at 630-325-8910 (e-mail rpecilunas@aol.com).

The **NPGA FAX Report** (ISSN 1040-0354/USPS 420-770) is published weekly on Monday, except for the week between Christmas and New Year's Day, by the National Propane Gas Association, 1600 Eisenhower Lane, Lisle, Illinois 60532. Periodical postage paid at Lisle, Illinois 60532. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to NPGA, 1600 Eisenhower Lane, Lisle, IL 60532; telephone 630-515-0600; fax, 630-515-8774; e-mail, info@npga.org.