



**Minnesota Department of Public Safety  
Division of Homeland Security and  
Emergency Management**



**2014-MN-002: Propane Shortage**

**Subject:** 2014-MN-002: Propane Shortage - Situation Report #5

**Reporting Period:** 02/03/2014 11:01 - 02/04/2014 11:00

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***Background / Current Situation***

A region-wide propane shortage is ongoing. On Tuesday, January 28, the state of Minnesota joined the states of Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan and Ohio in declaring Energy Emergencies, easing regulations on the transportation of propane and other home heating fuels. Minnesota and Ohio state emergency operations centers (SEOCs) are at Partial Activation.

Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton issued Minnesota Governor's Executive Order 14-02: "Declaring a State of Peacetime Emergency in the State of Minnesota" dated January 27, 2014.

The Minnesota State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC), coordinated by the Department of Public Safety, Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM) is activated at Level III: Partial Activation in support of this developing situation.

The SEOC will be open during normal business hours.

- State Incident Manager: Kevin Reed
- Operations Chief: Kari Goelz
- Logistics Chief: Cassie Calametti
- Public Information Officer: Doug Neville

The Minnesota Department of Commerce has the lead for helping individuals and households who need assistance paying for home heating fuel. The Minnesota Department of Agriculture is responsible for assisting farmers and ag producers.

The SEOC is holding regional conference calls with county emergency managers and state agency partners. Calls are scheduled twice weekly.

The SEOC Hotline for public calls opened the morning of January 30, 2014. Hours are 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The Hotline is staffed by personnel from the Departments of Commerce and local agencies.

Additional information is available on the HSEM website found at <https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/hsem/Pages/default.aspx>

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**Operations Section Chief**

***Agency Summary***

- MN.IT worked with staff from the Operations Section to expand the digital phone system and thin client work stations. The installation was completed and MN.IT staff will be on site in the morning to assist and trouble shoot as needed.
- Coordinated with Department of Commerce subject matter experts to identify and better respond to trends identified in Hotline calls.
- Assisted Logistics with coordinating the feeding plan to support the expanded Hotline operation.
- State agencies are not being requested to staff the SEOC at this time.
- Continued collecting state and local situation updates via the statewide conference calls.
- Monitored and provided situational awareness to SEOC partners and HSEM staff.
- Developed the Battle Rhythm for this incident:

0800 HSEM Command Briefing

0900 Hotline Opens

1000 Field Staff Call

1100 Agency Sit Rep Info Deadline

1300 Executive level update call

1300 Statewide Conference Calls (Mon and Thurs)

1400 Field Staff Call

1500 Sit Rep Distribution

1630 Hotline closes

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## Logistics Section Chief

## Agency Summary

- Adjusted meal plan to accommodate the increase to 40 Hotline personnel.

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## SEOC Volunteer Resource Coordinator

## Agency Summary

The HSEM Volunteer Resource Coordinator is continuing to work with the Salvation Army to answer questions from the Hotline about the Salvation Army's Heat Share program. It was also verified that (800) 842-7279 was the correct referral number for those interested in learning more about possible assistance from that program. They are gathering statistics about the numbers of people served thru Heat Share for a consolidated report on Friday 2/7.

MN Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (MNVOAD) reported that they have received a few calls for information regarding the propane situation, but no requests for assistance or reports of assistance being provided by voluntary agencies other than the Red Cross and Salvation Army.

United Way "211" operators have been provided with updated information about the propane situation to provide to their callers.

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## MN Duty Officer

## Agency Summary

The Duty Officer continues to receive calls regarding propane issues and callers are directed to the SEOC Hotline number for further assistance. Agriculture related propane calls will be routed directly to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

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## MN Department of Agriculture

## Agency Summary

- Activated an Incident Management Team to develop department situational awareness.
- Requesting field inspection staff report findings from the field.
- No reports from the field at this time.

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## MN Department of Commerce

## Agency Summary

### Monday, February 3, 2014 UPDATE

High	\$5.90
Low	\$3.11
Average	\$4.67

(as of January 27, 2014 – will be updated Tuesday with current SHOPP Report data)

### Propane Industry Status Report

- Propane Marketers Association is reporting that the local market is very unsettled.
- Currently there is a split in supply reported by the propane marketers – some have full propane storage, while others are working on the bottom.
- They are guessing that retail distributors are working off the bottom of their tanks and not filling with hopes that the price will go down and they can get cheaper propane.
- The other guess is that some retail distributors may not have enough credit with their suppliers and may be short of funds to stock up.
- Pricing has remained fairly steady, or up slightly. Industry reports \$2.75 - \$3.00 per gallon (FOB Conway KS).
- Suppliers are still predicting very tight supply if not a run out before this heating season is over.

## SEOC Call Center Update

Calls are consistent and Commerce has fully staffed the the SEOC Call Center.

### Call Log

- Thursday – 150
- Friday – 400
- Saturday – 300
- Sunday – 170
- Monday – 646
- Total – 1,666

Average conversation time was just over 4 minutes

Average wait time was 3 ½ minutes

110 abandoned calls (callers hung up)

To Address the high volume of calls and expected spike with the increase of eligibility levels, the following steps have been taken:

- SEOC call center is staffed through next Monday, 2/10.
- MN.IT and HSEM are installing additional phone lines to bring the total to 20 by Tuesday morning.
- Commerce will have 11 staff ready at 8:30.
- HSEM has 10 staff confirmed at 8:30 while DHS staffs up their call center employees to assist.
- DHS is anticipating staffing of 10 (morn) 10 (aft) through next Monday.
- HSEM is providing lunch for all employees (both shifts) through next Monday.
- Commerce created and implemented a call triage policy.
- Commerce started developing a database for the calls on Saturday. MN-IT is now working on database, will not likely be ready by tomorrow.

### LIHEAP UPDATE

- Governor Dayton will announce the increased availability to 60% SMI tomorrow morning.
- Drafted Letter to the President and Congressional Members seeking additional LIHEAP funds.

### COMMUNICATIONS

- Commissioner was interviewed by MPR, Fox9
- Congressman Walz had an event today – media out of the Rochester Market
- Continue to monitor media reports for accuracy

### GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

Contact: Rep. McNamar

Issue: He suggested limiting the price over wholesale rates that retailers can charge to consumers during a state of emergency. His additional concerns include:

- Price gouging
- Price discrepancies across the state. Propane prices are varying greatly depending on where you are located.
- People who have contracts with a delivery service. His concern is focused on consumers receiving a set price during the length of their contract but then the price greatly jumping after the contract has ended.

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## MN Department of Human Services

## Agency Summary

DHS is coordinating the staffing plan for DHS employees to assist answering calls at the Propane hotline through Monday, February 10.

DHS has received a report from DHS locations using Propane and there is no supply concern at this time.

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## **MN Department of Natural Resources**

## *Agency Summary*

The Department of Natural Resources has received no requests for assistance at this time. Actions are being taken to reduce propane usage throughout agency facilities.

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## **MN Fusion Center**

## *Agency Summary*

The Minnesota Fusion Center continues to monitor propane issues through the national network of fusion centers, through direct reports into the Fusion Center (including propane thefts), and through review of all MN Duty Officer reports. The Fusion Center will share all relevant information with the SEOC and in Fusion Center bulletins and briefings.

The Fusion Center did not receive any specific propane theft reports, requests for information (RFI) or information from law enforcement or threat liaison officers (TLO) in the past 24 hours.

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## **MN State Fire Marshal**

## *Agency Summary*

The Office of the Minnesota State Fire Marshal has posted a public information document about portable heating device safety. The document is available at <https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/hsem/weather-awareness-preparedness/Documents/heating-safety-sfm-hsem-photo.pdf> and may be publicly distributed.

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## **American Red Cross**

## *Agency Summary*

The American Red Cross continues to monitor the situation and is in contact with local government and community partners around potential needs. At this time, no response actions have been requested or taken.

On 2/3/14, ARC participated in the initial Minnesota Housing Task Force conference call.

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## **The Salvation Army**

## *Agency Summary*

Statistical information will be posted once a week beginning on Monday, February 10th.

### **HeatShare Assistance Criteria**

- Income: 50% or less of SMI (Same as LIHEAP)
- In Minnesota only
- Past due or current costs of a bill
- Target groups are seniors, Disabled and households with a monetary crisis
- Maximum of \$300
- Must have applied for Energy Assistance or County Emergency Assistance first
- One grant per Fiscal Year
- Access at 800-842-7279 or the nearest Salvation Army office

**Five Day Forecast: Minnesota - Stearns**

Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				
Clear	Clear	Clear	Clear	Clear
6 F / -14 C -9 F / -22 C	1 F / -17 C -15 F / -26 C	3 F / -16 C -9 F / -22 C	9 F / -12 C -9 F / -22 C	10 F / -12 C -7 F / -21 C

Current and future weather conditions include:

- Based on experimental modeling from the Storm Prediction Center, odds are very good that temperatures will remain below normal, and significantly below normal at that, with lows at most locations in Minnesota below zero through approximately Feb 17. Even some daytime highs may remain below zero during this time.
- Obviously forecasts can change, especially when we get out to such long-term forecasts.
- Technical Model Information

The underlying data come from the "CFS ensemble." The model is run 4 times a day and point forecasts are generated for the 115 weather forecast office locations shown. This is experimental and data may not always be current. Observational data (dots on the far left of the graph on the website listed following) are archived for approximately a week to track how well the forecast verified for some parameters. This model can be accessed at <http://wxvu.net/spc/exper/sref/cfsplumes/>