

# NATF Redacted Operating Experience Report

## Vehicle Fire Caused by Propane Torch

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## Topic

Vehicle Fire Caused by Propane Torch

## Description

A disposable propane torch was being used to thaw an air line on a breaker within a substation yard. The torch stopped working because of the cold ambient temperature (estimated to be -11°F), which condensed the propane. The torch (bottle and nozzle) was turned off and placed on the dash of the truck with the heater on, for the purpose of thawing and expanding the frozen propane gas. A small fire resulted, which was immediately extinguished with snow. A fire extinguisher was available but was not required. No injuries or impact to customers occurred.



View of the burned area of the truck dashboard. Snow was used to extinguish the fire.

## Lessons Learned

1. Propane torches should not be placed on the dashboards of vehicles.
2. Thawing propane cylinders on dashboard heating vents is not a good practice and should not be used in the future.
3. Housekeeping of vehicle dashboards/interiors was considered a contributing factor.
4. Propane torch tips need to cool completely before being left unattended and must be kept far away from combustibles.
5. Training and protocols regarding the proper storage and use of propane bottles are critical for all employees using these tools.

## Actions Taken

1. Crew extinguished the fire and removed the propane tank from the truck cab to establish a safe environment.
2. Initiated a work stand-down removed the vehicle from service for repair.
3. Performed a "learning opportunity" review with a field-staff team; also reviewed and shared the NATF redacted OER-366 "Disposable Portable Propane Tank Storage" report.
4. Implemented corrective actions including (a) training for personnel and (b) brass caps with O-rings were acquired for use during storage.
5. Communicated all results with other personnel.
6. Considering alternative methods, such as heat guns, to thaw/heat frozen devices.
7. Brass caps with O-rings were issued to be used when the tank is in storage.
8. Propane storage and usage will be included in new training programs.

## Extent of Condition

A full inventory of portable propane tanks was performed.