businesscompanion
trading standards law explained

Sale and delivery of oil and gas

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In this guide, the words 'must' or 'must not' are used where there is a legal requirement to do (or not do) something. The word 'should' is used where there is established legal guidance or best practice that is likely to help you avoid breaking the law.

This guidance is for England, Scotland and Wales

There are legal controls concerning the selling and delivery of oil (consisting primarily of diesel and kerosene), butane and propane gas. Oil and gas must be accurately measured or weighed, and a ticket given to the customer indicating the quantity delivered.

Oil measurement

Oil sold in bulk is measured by the litre using a bulk fuel road tanker equipped with a calibrated meter.

Oil is pumped from a compartment on the delivery tanker through a meter that has been tested for accuracy and sealed. From there the oil flows to the tank. Each meter must be at zero before each delivery and have a ticket printing mechanism. There is often a minimum delivery associated with road tanker metering systems, typically 500 litres, but can be less depending on the tanker.

Road tanker metering systems are 'in use for trade' and subject to weights and measures legislation,

which specifies the maximum permissible errors within which they must measure fuel. If you operate road tankers with metering systems, they must be passed as fit for use for trade and bear the appropriate marks.

It is good practice to ensure that the meters are periodically tested for accuracy, and that the seals protecting the security of the measuring system are regularly inspected and remain intact. Should any seal become damaged or broken, for whatever reason, it must be replaced by an approved verifier or inspector using their official stamp number. Contact your local Trading Standards Service if you require further information.

It is normal practice to 'dip' the customer's tank before delivery commences to ensure that the amount of fuel ordered can be accommodated by the tank. This will avoid overfilling the tank, which could result in fuel loss and potential environmental contamination.

Markings

For the UK market, products assessed against EU rules by an EU notified body will be CE-marked, followed by the M symbol and year of manufacture.

The CE mark indicates that the equipment has been manufactured in accordance with all relevant EU legislation (including low voltage electromagnetic compatibility, restriction on hazardous substances, etc).

For the GB market only, products assessed against UK rules by a UK approved body will be UKCA-marked, followed by the M symbol and year of manufacture.

On 1 October 2024, the Government introduced legislation permitting the CE mark to be used indefinitely for most products. This follows the previous date of 31 December 2024 by which relevant products on sale in GB were required to use the UKCA mark.

For more information on these marks, please see 'CE / UKCA marking'.

Guidance on placing UKCA- or CE-marked products on the GB market can be found on the GOV.UK website.

The M mark may be found on the tanker's data plate and indicates that the equipment it is attached to has been manufactured in accordance with legal metrology requirements. The year of manufacture appears next to the M. The M mark follows the CE or UKCA mark.

Also found on the data plate is the approved or notified body number that indicates which organisation examined and approved the equipment as being in accordance with all manufacturing and accuracy requirements.

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The requalification sticker indicates that the equipment has been repaired or adjusted since it was manufactured, to maintain manufacturing and accuracy requirements. The examples below are those used by, respectively, inspectors, approved verifiers and approved manufacturers.

Gas measurement

Gas in bulk

Bulk propane - or liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) as it is also known - is measured by the litre and, like heating oil, if destined for domestic use is delivered by road tanker. The meter used to measure the fuel, as it goes from tanker to storage tank, is periodically calibrated and sealed to prevent unauthorised access. Each meter is fitted with a ticket printer. Some meters are fitted with electronic meter heads and the printer for this system may be located in the driver's cab.

Propane / LPG meters are not controlled by weights and measures legislation, so there are no associated legal limits of error. However, the equipment is 'in use for trade' as it measures product for which payment is made and its performance in terms of accuracy should be comparable with road-tanker metering systems that operate to +/- 0.5% of the quantity delivered.

Gas in cylinders

Gas cylinders are sold by reference to the net weight of the contents (in kilograms), which should be clearly marked on the cylinder (and must also say 'butane' or 'propane').

The plant where the cylinders are filled must use accurate weighing or measuring equipment that has been checked and tested to ensure accuracy.

Net weight = the weight full (gross weight) minus the weight of the cylinder when empty (tare weight).

The empty (tare) weight is normally on the neck or rim of the cylinder or on a permanent label.

Storage conditions

You should consider the hazards of storing oil and gas, as both are highly flammable. Your obligations differ depending upon whether you are storing as a business or consumer. If in doubt, contact the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

Trade associations

- Liquid Gas UK: LPG and bioLPG industry. The website contains an extensive list of publications on the use and storage of LPG.
- OFTEC (Oil Firing Technical Association): heating oil industry
- UKIFDA (UK and Ireland Fuel Distributors Association): liquid fuels distribution industry

Please note that a link to an organisation in the list does not imply any approval or warranty as to the standing or capability of that organisation by the Chartered Trading Standards Institute.

Other legislation

Part 4, Chapter 1 of the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024 (DMCCA) makes it an offence to give any false or misleading statements about the price charged and descriptions applied to goods. For example, claiming that heating oil or bottled gas have particular properties, such as efficiency, cleanliness or heating properties that cannot be substantiated, or are false or misleading.

Please see 'Protection from unfair trading (criminal law)' for more information on the DMCCA.

Contracts between traders and consumers are also controlled by the Consumer Rights Act 2015 (CRA). The Act requires that goods and services provided by traders to consumers should be in accordance with the contract, provided with reasonable care and skill, at a reasonable price, etc. It also provides consumers with remedies they can require from the trader if goods and services provided do not meet the terms of the contract; these remedies include a reduction in the price paid.

Under the CRA, heating oil and bottled gas supplied to consumers should be:

- Of satisfactory quality (for example, it should burn correctly)
- Fit for purpose (for example, it should be compatible with any appliances for which it is specified, particularly in relation to the type of gas, as different types operate at differing pressures; it must also be fit for any specific or particular purpose the consumer makes known to the merchant)
- As described (for example, if it is described as being a particular brand or having particular combustion properties or other features, etc, that is what should be delivered to the consumer)

See 'Selling and supplying goods' for detailed information on the CRA.

Where specific legal requirements, such as those detailed earlier in this guide, impose stricter duties and requirements on traders, they take precedence and must be complied with.

Trading Standards

For more information on the work of Trading Standards Services and the possible consequences of not abiding by the law, please see 'Trading Standards: powers, enforcement and penalties'.

In this update

General detail added.

Last reviewed / updated: July 2026

Key legislation

- Weights and Measures Act 1985
- Consumer Rights Act 2015:
    - Part 1, Chapters 2 and 4
- Measuring Instruments Regulations 2016
- Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024:
    - Part 4, Chapter 1

Please note

This information is intended for guidance; only the courts can give an authoritative interpretation of the law.

The guide's 'Key legislation' links go to the legislation.gov.uk website. The site usually updates the legislation to include any amendments made to it. However, this is not always the case. Information on all changes made to legislation can be found by following the above links and clicking on the 'More Resources' tab.

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Source URL:
https://www.businesscompanion.info/en/quick-guides/weights-and-measures/sale-and-delivery-of-oil-and-gas