



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MANCHESTER TANK TO UNVEIL ONE-POUND REFILLABLE PROPANE CYLINDER

Franklin, Tenn. (April 21, 2011) – Tennessee-based Manchester Tank & Equipment Co. unveiled its new one-pound refillable cylinder at the NPGA Southeastern Convention & International Propane Expo in April 2011, marking an innovation in the propane cylinder industry, say company officials.

“Our one-pound refillable cylinder is unique to the cylinder industry,” said Scott Viebranz, Vice President of Sales. “We see it improving the way the landscaping and camping markets operate, as they transition from disposable propane cylinders to refillables.

Our one-pound refillable cylinder is convenient, economical, efficient, and environmentally friendly; we see it helping to reduce the mountains of disposable cylinders discarded each year into landfills. And, the one-pound refillable cylinder pays for itself with just 16 hours of use.”

After years of research, a marketable product is now available. An initial production of 5,000 units is available for pre-sale orders at the NPGA Southeastern Propane Show. Orders for refill kits can also be taken then.

Applications for a Refillable Propane Cylinder

The extensive research and design put into the development of this one-pound refillable cylinder lends its use to recreational, industrial, and commercial outdoor power equipment applications. Commercial uses include lawn care equipment such as leaf blowers, string trimmers, generators, weed burners; hand torches, forklift applications, and plumbing. Recreational uses include camping appliances such as lanterns and small heaters and portable cooking appliances such as grills and hot plates.

For landscapers, there are two ways to adopt propane: buy an original equipment manufacturers (OEM) propane mower, or convert gasoline mowers and other gasoline-powered equipment to run on propane.

Propane conversion kits could range from 1 to 45 horsepower, with prices ranging from a few hundred dollars to several thousand dollars. Some kits have dual fuel options and can be applied to any manufacturer’s application.

Propane conversion centers are located throughout the country. For mower fleets not near a conversion center, some companies will send a mechanic to the location to perform the conversion. For large-volume conversions, companies will train the fleet’s mechanics about how to convert and maintain the mowers.

To find companies that stock propane conversion kits and/or perform propane mower conversions, contact Lesley Shorter, marketing manager of Manchester Tank at (615) 370-6107. Also try your state’s Propane Gas Association for a list of association web sites, or use the Propane Education & Research Council’s “Find a Propane Retailer” tool on its web site at www.usepropane.com.



Research & Development

Frank Lane, director of research & development for Manchester Tank, created the one-pound refillable cylinder. Before joining Manchester, Frank worked for years in the retail propane business. During that period, he saw the potential value of a one-pound refillable cylinder.

“I used torches for soldering water and refrigeration lines, and for lighting pilots,” says Lane. “My greatest frustration was when I ran out of propane for my torches. I thought it was such a waste to throw away cylinders and buy new ones for small appliances.” That prompted the idea to develop a one-pound refillable cylinder.

In 2002, Lane began working for Manchester Tank in sales. He then moved into its Research & Development Division in 2005 where he was given an opportunity to work on his idea to develop a one-pound refillable propane cylinder. He never imagined that it would take so long to develop.

He started with valve development, and was challenged with fitting a lot of features and functions into such a small valve without compromising its durability, while at the same time making it light enough to use.

Distinguishing Characteristic – Shut-Off Valve

According to Lane, the most distinguishing feature of the one-pound refillable cylinder that sets it apart from its competitors is its positive shut-off valve.

“Disposable cylinders can sustain damage to their valves, leaving no way to shut-off the flow of gas from the cylinder,” says Lane. “The only option is to leave the disposable cylinder hooked to the piece of equipment, or let it leak until the cylinder is empty. With our refillable cylinder, you don’t have that problem because, in the event of a damaged valve, the flow of propane can be stopped by turning the valve to its off position.”

The cylinder valve is Underwriters Laboratories (UL) listed and patent pending. The fill adaptor is intentionally designed so it cannot be used to fill a disposable cylinder, says Lane.

Container Research

In 2007, the company built a prototype and the design was then refined over a period of two years. The container had to meet design specifications for refillable cylinders as required by the Department of Transportation. Design considerations included the strength to withstand dropping without breaking, and it had to be safe and durable enough for years of use. All test parameters were extended beyond design specification requirements to ensure cylinder performance.

“We knew the cylinder had to be robust,” says Lane. “Knowing that it would be used in camping situations and by contractors who may drop it from great heights or subject it to hard use, we made sure it was safe by performing durability and drop testing from greater heights than required.”

The one-pound refillable cylinder also required cycle testing at 10,000 cycles at twice the service pressure. “Our last test was at 42,000 cycles and the one-pound refillable cylinder was still intact, with no signs of leaks, fractures or cracks,” says Lane. “We finally quit testing because we were wearing out our machines.”



“In essence, we have made a ‘rechargeable battery’ designed to last many years instead of a ‘throw away battery’ that fills up landfills.”

Other Factors in Research & Development

The size of the cylinder was another important factor that Manchester’s Research & Development Division considered in making sure it fit the vast majority of equipment currently used in the marketplace.

Manchester Tank also considered the production and fill methods used to build this product. The result was that the company had to put in new assembly lines to manufacture this one-pound sized cylinder because it is significantly smaller than any catalog item they have ever built.

Reducing Our Environmental Footprint

“Manchester Tank and its parent company, McWane, Inc. take their commitment to the environment seriously,” says President Larry Whitehead of Manchester Tank & Equipment Co. “Our family of McWane companies works continually to identify ways we can reduce the environmental footprint of our manufacturing operations. The products we sell are refillable and long-lived, and through the one-pound refillable cylinder we seek to extend that initiative into another niche of the propane cylinder marketplace. We manufacture our products in an environmentally friendly way, and we will continue to seek opportunities to help our customers use those products in the same way.”

About Manchester Tank & Equipment Co.

Manchester Tank & Equipment Co. (www.mantank.com), a division of McWane, Inc. of Birmingham, Ala., is an original equipment manufacturer (OEM) and nationwide distributor of low-pressure vessels, domestic and industrial cylinders, propane tanks, air receivers, and fire suppressants. Its headquarters are located in Franklin, Tenn., with manufacturing plants in Bedford, Ind., Crossville, Tenn., Elkhart, Ind., Quincy, Ill, Echuca, Australia and two locations in Chile.

Its product lines include: propane cylinders; gas grill cylinders; industrial air receivers; forklift cylinders; tanks for automotive, air brake and fire suppression systems applications.

About McWane, Inc.

Privately-owned McWane, Inc. (www.mcwane.com), led by Chairman Phillip McWane, conducts business throughout North American and the world. Its 25 manufacturing plants by industry include: four pipe facilities; four valve and hydrant facilities; seven soil pipe and utility fittings facilities; seven tank manufacturing facilities, and one fire extinguisher facility.

Contact:

Lesley Shorter, Marketing Manager

lshorter@mantank.com

1000 Corporate Centre Drive

Franklin, TN 37067

Tel: (615) 370-6107 Fax: (615) 376-3922

###