

Clear View in The News

LP Gas Tanks™



Ragasco USA's Novel LP Tank



The Clear View™ LP tank, which comes in four different sizes, is designed for outdoor grills, RVs, trailers, motor homes, and commercial vehicles.

by CHERYL DANGEL CULLEN

How do you improve on a tried-and-true product? Ragasco USA hopes that the answer is to take a clear view. Phil Tyson has never been one to shy away from new products or ventures, so when he stumbled upon Ragasco AS (based in Raufoss, Norway), he put together a deal. It made him the company's primary U.S. distributor of its clearly different version of an LP tank.

Ragasco AS makes the Clear View™ LP cylinder—a clear tank that allows the user to see the amount of fuel remaining in it. There are four different sizes: The smallest, an 11-pound unit, is popular in the RV and camping industries because of its size and portability; the 17-pound unit is the choice for outdoor grills; the 22-pound model is popular for larger RVs, trailers, and motor

homes; and the 31-pound tank is used in the commercial-vehicle industry.

The Clear View LP cylinder was developed 10 years ago. During its first three years on the European market, it picked up a 60% share of the market. Tyson, CEO of Ragasco USA (Sarasota, Florida), is aiming to go against the tide by selling a product that is clearly different from the LP cylinder to which we've all grown accustomed, which was accepted simply because there were no other options.

Tyson says, "Most consumers are willing to accept the fact that they have a rusty steel cylinder that leaves stains, is heavy to carry, and has handles that are uncomfortable to carry—because there never has been an alternative. As soon as we have the opportu-

nity to show the Clear View tank to someone, he or she says, 'Wow, I love it!'"

Tyson is betting that the Clear View tank will continue to grow in popularity. Currently, annual U.S. sales are just under \$1 million. "This year, we're anticipating doubling that," he says.

The most obvious advantage of the Clear View is the simple fact that it is, after all, clear. It has a translucent cylinder that makes the fuel level visible. "You can see the fuel, and it is 100% accurate," Tyson says. "Many cylinders are returned for refilling with as much as 30% of the fuel still in there because people are afraid they'll run out of gas, and there is no way of determining (Click to drag and move the page without weighing it.)

This leads to the next problem. "Most scales are inaccurate," Tyson says. "Some companies sell gauges that are retrofitted on cylinders, and they are based on the pressure in the cylinder—but the pressure stays constant until it runs out, so those gauges won't tell you that the fuel is getting low until you're down to the last 10 minutes."

Another advantage of the Clear View is its weight; it's 50% lighter than steel cylinders. "A steel 31-pound cylinder weighs more empty than ours does full," Tyson adds.

The Clear View cylinder is made of a corrosion-free, nonmarring resin-and-fiberglass material and has a polyvinyl one-piece interior liner, with no seams that could leak. The cylinder also is easy to transport, with an ergonomic handle and a tip-proof, flat base that won't let it topple over in a car or truck, as traditional cylinders are known to do.

Despite its good looks, the Clear View is amazingly durable, as well as safe. "LP cylinders are safe; ours are just safer," Tyson states. "In a drop test, ours is still serviceable, while on the first drop, steel cylinders

are punctured or destroyed. The Clear View tank is five times more resistant to puncture damage than a steel cylinder, which few people realize is only about four times thicker than a beer can."

During fire testing, the Clear View cylinder never burst. "When a fire reaches a certain temperature, the pressure in traditional cylinders rises, and the tanks explode—which is why fire marshals in the United States won't allow them to be stored inside any building, for any purpose. They are supposed to be outside, where there is good air circulation," Tyson says.

"When the Clear View tank is put to the fire test and the temperature reaches more than 500 degrees, it weeps fuel, resulting in a controlled fire. Because of that, the Clear View cylinder is in the process of being approved for interior use," he reports.

Tyson expects that it will be another year or two before the Clear View tank receives approval for use indoors, but when it does, he expects his market to become even wider. "Consumers will be able to use them inside, instead of the disposable cylinders they use now, which end up in landfills because they can't be refilled," Tyson adds.

Currently, Ragasco USA has about 50 to 60 dealers on board; that number grows daily, as Tyson promotes the benefits of the Clear View (and of propane) throughout the United States and the Caribbean. "We're not in a fast-moving industry, so it's not going to be an overnight process, but we've managed to prove our products will work within the industry and save money," he says.

To that end, Tyson wants to educate more people on the benefits of propane. He explains, "I don't think people realize just how good a fuel propane is. Pound for pound, it's the most efficient fuel we have in the world, and it is readily available and clean." ■