

Trump administration blocks California law requiring reusable propane cylinders

A California law aimed at phasing out the sale of certain single-use propane cylinders will not take effect as planned after the Trump administration [determined the state law is preempted by federal regulations](#).

The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA), part of the U.S. Department of Transportation, issued its determination this week, saying California's reusability requirement conflicts with federal hazardous materials regulations.

The law, Senate Bill 1280, was set to prohibit the sale of certain non-reusable and non-refillable propane cylinders in California beginning Jan. 1, 2027.

The small, typically one-pound cylinders are commonly used for camping stoves, portable heaters and lanterns.

California officials and environmental groups have argued the disposable cylinders create a safety and environmental problem when they are thrown away.

The California Product Stewardship Council says between 4 and 7 million of these single-use tanks are sold in California each year, and only about 25% of those are recycled.

"The rest of them are typically landfilled," Doug Kobold, executive director of the California Product Stewardship Council, said. "They cause explosions in our material recovery facilities, our landfills. So they're a danger to the workers."

Kobold said the goal of the law was not to eliminate propane use, but to move consumers toward refillable cylinders.

"We really want folks to have a cylinder that is designed like our 20-pound barbecue tanks," he said.

PHMSA's determination came after Worthington Enterprises, a propane cylinder manufacturer, [asked the federal agency to intervene](#).

The company argued California's requirement is preempted by the federal Hazardous Materials Transportation Act because it imposes additional design and manufacturing requirements on propane cylinders that are authorized under federal regulations.

PHMSA agreed.

The agency said California's law creates a separate state standard for propane cylinders and conflicts with the federal government's goal of maintaining uniform hazardous-material transportation requirements.

California Attorney General Rob Bonta had argued against that position.

Bonta's office said the state law does not conflict with federal requirements and argued California can require reusable cylinders while still complying with federal hazardous-material regulations.

Bonta also said the law was designed in part to protect workers who handle waste and recycling.

State Sen. John Laird, the author of SB 1280, also criticized the federal decision.

"This is a disastrous decision for our environment, and it will make an already difficult problem harder for California communities," Laird said in a statement.

Laird has not said whether he plans to introduce the measure again, but the law was never intended to ban propane in California.

What happens next?

The federal determination means California cannot enforce the reusability requirement while the federal preemption determination remains in effect.

Bonta's office said it is aware of the decision and is evaluating its options.

Kobold said advocates have spent years trying to address the waste and safety problems associated with the cylinders and expect the fight to continue.

"We go multiple years trying to get laws in place that will make sense and make everything better for California citizens," Kobold said. "Most of the time it's a marathon, not a sprint."

