

More Propane, More Problems: California Likely to Pass Ban on Single-Use Gas Cans

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California campers may need to find new options for cooking if the state passes a ban on single-use gas canisters this month.

The California State Assembly approved a ban on single-use propane gas canisters this week. Gov. Gavin Newsom will likely sign the bill into law before the end of the month, according to news reports.

While a longtime mainstay for campers, single-use gas canisters have caused increasing problems for park officials. They're challenging to dispose of, are dangerous, and are discarded in large numbers.

That could change with the passage of **Senate Bill 1256**. It would require manufacturers of single-use propane canisters to pursue refillable options. If Newsom signs the bill, it will trigger a 5-year period for retailers and manufacturers to phase out single-use cylinders by January 2028.

“These 1-pound propane cylinders are often among the litter found in our parks and beaches, highly expensive for local governments to properly handle and dangerous for workers in our hazardous waste programs,” said California State Sen. Bob Wieckowski **earlier this month**. Wieckowski introduced S.B. 1256.

More than 4 million single-use propane tanks are sold annually in California, according to the **California Product Stewardship Council**. Yet the organization said that only 1 million are recycled through the Household Hazardous Waste programs offered by local governments.

The bill has several caveats, like an exception for isobutane — the go-to choice for many backpackers. It also exempts the “tall boy” propane canisters used in the construction industry and the emergency supplies of government agencies.



Man lighting a portable propane stove; (photo/Shutterstock)

An Increasing Issue for Parks

Yosemite National Park stopped selling single-use propane cans 2 years ago. As hazardous waste, the canisters don't make it easy for proper disposal. In Yosemite, park employees constantly find them as litter. Then volunteers count and categorize the canisters before shredding them in a special machine explicitly purchased for that purpose.

The park handled 24,000 of the canisters last year, the **San Francisco Chronicle** reported.

“We will have hundreds if not thousands of them in the park,” Yosemite spokesman Scott Gediman told the newspaper.

Instead of the green cylinders from Coleman or Bernzomatic, the park now sells **refillable canisters** from Manteca company **Little Kamper**. Yosemite also offers an exchange program, allowing campers to trade old cans for fresh ones.

While California does offer hazardous waste facilities for proper disposal, they're often not accessible, Sen. Wieckowski's office said. It's also difficult to tell if a propane cylinder is empty, meaning many cans with gas end up in the trash, creating a safety hazard.

When the cans are taken to a Material Recovery Facility, an employee must puncture the cans with special equipment to ensure they're empty and safe for processing.

If passed, the new law would institute fines for offenders. Those who violate the bill following the ban date will receive \$500 per day penalties for first offenses, \$1,000 per day fines for second offenses, and \$2,000 per day fines for all subsequent violations.



Campaign Will Reveal Data on Plastic Pollution in National Parks

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