



An Extended Guide · No. 1283

Hooking Up to a Propane Supply: Cylinders, Tanks & Regulators

Hoses, regulators,
and safe connections

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! Before you begin — a quick safety note.

This guide covers work involving propane, which can cause serious injury, fire, or property damage if something goes wrong. It's here for general information only, not professional advice. If you're not completely comfortable — or if your local codes require a licensed pro — please stop and hire a qualified propane supplier or licensed gas fitter. Turn off the power at the breaker before any electrical step. Never work on gas lines yourself; if you smell gas, leave right away and call your gas company or 911. There's no shame in calling a pro — that's often the smart, safe choice. You follow this guide at your own risk. — Bill

A Note From Bill

If you've got a propane cylinder in one hand and a coil of hose in the other, wondering where any of it actually attaches — you're exactly who this guide is for.

Hooking up propane looks more intimidating than it is. It's really three simple parts working together, plus one habit — the soapy-water leak check — that you'll do every single time. Let's go through it slowly.

What you'll get out of this guide

- The parts of any propane hookup, in plain English
- What POL and ACME fittings actually are, and how to tell them apart
- The leak-check habit that matters every time
- Why a big yard tank is a job for a professional, not a weekend project
- Town and country notes, and the safety rules that never change

★ First time doing this?

A first hookup is a great thing to do together, once, so it's second nature after. Call me at (330) 200-8042.

The Propane Hookup, in One Page

If you only read one page today, make it this one.

- ❑ A propane hookup is three parts: a hose, a regulator, and a fitting that matches your tank.
- ❑ POL fittings are common on upright cylinders; ACME and quick-connect fittings show up on hose kits and grill-style setups.
- ❑ Always check every connection with soapy water before you rely on it — bubbles mean a leak.
- ❑ A big yard tank hookup is a propane supplier's job, not a DIY project.
- ❑ Run the generator outdoors only, 20+ feet from the house — the hookup doesn't change the CO rule.

✓ Practice once, calmly

The best time to learn your hookup is a quiet afternoon, not the middle of a storm with a flashlight in your teeth.

The Parts of a Propane Hookup, Plainly

Strip away the jargon and there are really only four things involved.

- **The tank or cylinder** — where the propane lives, under pressure.
- **The hose** — carries propane from the tank to the generator.
- **The regulator** — steps the pressure down to what the generator's engine actually wants.
- **The fitting** — where the hose connects to the tank; its shape depends on what kind of tank you have.

Put those four together correctly, check for leaks, and you're ready to run. The rest of this guide is just a closer look at each piece.

✓ It's simpler assembled than described

Reading about four parts can sound like more than it is. Once you've connected one cylinder, the whole thing clicks into place — literally and figuratively.

The Hose: Your Fuel's Pathway

The hose is simple, but it's not a place to improvise — it's the one part carrying pressurized fuel between the tank and the engine.

Use a hose that's actually made and rated for propane, sized to comfortably reach from your tank's safe outdoor spot to the generator without stretching tight or kinking. A hose that's cracked, brittle, or visibly worn should be replaced before it's ever pressurized again.

- Keep the hose away from the generator's hot muffler and any sharp edges it might rest against.
- Give it a quick look each time you connect — cracking, soft spots, or a loose fitting are all reasons to stop and replace it.
- A hose that's the right length for your setup means less coiling, less strain on the fittings, and less to trip over in the dark.

✓ Keep a spare hose in the tote

A hose is an inexpensive thing to keep a spare of — much cheaper than being stuck with a cracked one during an outage.

The Regulator: Why It's There

This small brass fitting does an outsized job.

Propane sits in the tank at a much higher pressure than any engine wants to see. The regulator's whole job is to step that pressure down to something steady and safe before it ever reaches the generator. Without it, propane would rush in far too fast and far too hard for the engine to use properly.

- Regulators are matched to the job — the one in your hose kit is sized for a portable generator, not a whole-house appliance.
- A regulator that's icy, damaged, or clearly not seating right should be replaced rather than forced into service.
- Most portable setups pair the regulator right into the hose assembly, so you're really dealing with one connected unit.

✓ Keep it clean and dry

A regulator that stays reasonably clean and dry between uses lasts a lot longer and seats more reliably each time.

The Fitting: POL & ACME, Explained Simply

Two fitting styles cover most of what you'll run into. Neither is complicated once you've seen it.

Fitting	What it's like
POL	The most common fitting on upright cylinders — a hand-tight, reverse-threaded nut that seats onto the valve. Reverse-threaded just means you turn it the “wrong” way to tighten — that's normal, not a mistake.
ACME	A round, hand-wheel style fitting common on hose kits and quick-connect setups — it turns more like a garden-hose coupling.

Your hose and regulator kit is matched to a specific fitting type — check what your cylinder or tank actually has before you buy one, or bring the tank with you to the store.

✓ **When in doubt, bring the tank**

Taking the actual cylinder (or a clear photo of its valve) with you when shopping for a hose kit is the surest way to come home with the right fitting.

Quick-Connects: Faster, Tool-Free Hookups

Some setups skip tools entirely, and it's worth knowing if yours is one of them.

A quick-connect fitting lets you attach or detach a hose from a tank or a fixed supply line with a simple push and twist — no wrench required. They're especially handy on a portable generator you connect and disconnect often, or on a fixed line running from a yard tank.

- Quick-connects still need the same care as any fitting — snug, leak-checked, never forced.
- If your generator or supply line already has one installed, it's usually the easiest part of the whole hookup.
- Not every setup has one — a standard hand-tightened fitting works just as well, it just takes an extra moment.

✓ A nice option, not a requirement

If you don't have a quick-connect, there's nothing wrong with your setup — it's a convenience, not a safety upgrade.

Connecting a Small Cylinder, Step by Step

At a high level, connecting a small cylinder follows the same friendly pattern every time.

- Make sure the **cylinder valve is closed** before you connect anything.
- Attach the hose fitting to the cylinder and to the generator's propane inlet, snug but not forced.
- Dab a little **soapy water** on the connection, then open the cylinder valve slowly — bubbles mean a leak, so stop and tighten or reseal the fitting.
- Once it's leak-free and the generator's fuel selector is set to propane, you're ready to start.

That's the everyday version, start to finish. The next few pages go a little deeper on the leak check and on what to do with a larger, fixed tank.

! If you ever smell gas

Propane has a rotten-egg smell added on purpose so leaks are easy to notice. If you smell it, don't light anything or flip switches — close the valve and sort it out in the open air.

Hookups in Town or the Suburbs

Most town households are hooking up something small and portable — which makes this a genuinely easy job to feel confident about.

What usually matters most here

- **Small, simple setups are the norm.** A hose kit and a cylinder or two covers most town needs without any special hardware.
- **Quick-connects earn their keep.** If you're connecting and disconnecting often for a shorter outage, a quick-connect fitting saves real time.
- **Keep it tidy.** Coil the hose and store it with the cylinder in the same outdoor spot, so it's never a scramble to find at 11 p.m.
- **This is usually a comfortable DIY job.** Small cylinder hookups don't need a professional — just care and the soapy-water habit.

A common town setup is a single hose-and-regulator kit that stays connected to the generator, with a fresh cylinder swapped in as needed.

✓ Practice before the power's actually out

A calm weekend is the perfect time to connect a cylinder once, just to build confidence before you ever need to do it in a storm.

Hookups on a Well or in the Country

Out in the country, a hookup is more likely to involve a bigger tank — and the stakes are higher when a well pump is on the other end of it.

What usually matters most here

- **A bigger tank usually means a bigger hookup conversation.** If a yard tank is part of your plan, that connection is a job for a propane supplier or licensed gas fitter, not a weekend project.
- **The well pump doesn't care how the propane got there — only that it keeps coming.** A properly sized, professionally installed line is what keeps a long outage from becoming a dry tap.
- **Smaller cylinders still have their place** as a backup-to-the-backup, hooked up the same simple way covered earlier in this guide.
- **Distance matters more out here.** A longer hose run from tank to generator still needs the same care and leak-checking as a short one — don't skip steps just because it's a bigger job.

A typical country setup pairs a professionally connected yard tank, sized for the well pump's needs, with a spare cylinder or two kept ready as a simple backup.

★ Let's plan the big-tank hookup together

Coordinating a propane supplier for a yard-tank connection, sized around what your well pump actually needs, is exactly the kind of planning I help rural customers with.

Leak-Checking With Soapy Water

This is the one habit that matters every single time you connect propane — no exceptions.

- Mix a little dish soap with water — a spray bottle or a cup and a brush both work fine.
- Apply it to every connection: the cylinder valve, the hose fittings, and the regulator.
- Open the valve slowly and watch closely. **Bubbles mean a leak** — close the valve, tighten or reseal the fitting, and check again.
- No bubbles after a minute or so means you're good to go.

It takes less than two minutes, and it's the difference between a hookup you can trust and one you're just hoping is fine.

! Never use a flame to check for a leak

It sounds obvious written down, but it's an old habit some people grew up with. Soapy water only — always.

Big Yard Tanks: Why That's a Supplier's Job

Everything so far in this guide is a comfortable DIY job. A large, fixed yard tank is different.

Connecting a generator to a big yard tank isn't just a bigger version of hooking up a cylinder. A propane supplier or licensed gas fitter runs the generator off its **own branch line** off the tank, sized for the generator's actual fuel demand, typically including a **sediment or drip trap** to catch debris and moisture. The line often ends in a quick-connect so a portable generator can disconnect between uses.

- Sharing a branch line with your furnace or water heater can starve the generator of fuel under load — or even snuff out a pilot light elsewhere in the house.
- A professional sizes the line for the generator's real demand, not a guess.
- This is exactly the kind of job where the cost of doing it right the first time is far less than the cost of doing it wrong.

There's a whole guide in this series on propane tank sizes and runtime if you're still deciding whether a yard tank makes sense for your household.

★ Let me help you coordinate it

I'm glad to help you think through the sizing and connect you with a propane supplier who does this work safely and to code.

The Rule That Matters No Matter the Hookup

However your propane gets to the generator, where the generator itself runs never changes.

A running generator's exhaust contains **carbon monoxide**, an invisible, odorless gas that can kill. Breathing enough of it can make you pass out — or worse — before you realize anything's wrong.

- Run the generator **outdoors only**, at least **20 feet** from the house, exhaust pointed away from doors, windows, and vents.
- **Never** run it in a garage, basement, shed, or carport, even briefly.
- Put **battery-backup CO alarms** on every level of the house and near bedrooms, and test them.
- If an alarm sounds, or anyone feels dizzy or sick, get outside into fresh air and call 911.

! A leak-free hookup is still not an indoor hookup

Even a perfectly sealed propane connection doesn't make it safe to run the generator indoors. The two rules are separate, and both matter.

Handling the Fittings Safely

A few habits keep every connection trustworthy, not just the first one.

Do	Don't
Hand-tighten, then snug with care	Force a fitting that won't seat properly
Check every connection with soapy water	Ever use a flame to check for a leak
Use only listed hose and regulator hardware	Improvise with mismatched or unrated parts
Store hose and regulator out of the weather	Leave a connection assembled indefinitely without a fresh check

! A stuck fitting is a stop sign, not a puzzle to force

If something won't seat after a reasonable try, stop and reseal it rather than muscling it — a forced fitting is far more likely to leak.

Cold-Weather Notes for Your Hookup

Freezing temperatures add a couple of small wrinkles to an otherwise simple hookup.

Frost or ice can build up on a regulator in humid cold, and a fitting that's iced over can be tempting to force. Don't. Brush ice away gently, and if something's genuinely frozen stuck, warm hands and patience — never a flame — are the only acceptable tools.

- Check connections for leaks with soapy water even in the cold — it still works fine.
- There's a whole guide in this series devoted to cold-weather propane, including why a tank itself can struggle to keep up in a hard freeze.

✓ Store the hose kit somewhere it won't freeze stiff

A hose kept in an unheated but sheltered spot — a tote in the garage rather than left out in the open — is easier to work with when you actually need it.

After You Connect: A Quick Pre-Start Check

Before you ever pull the cord, run through this short list.

- ☐ Leak check done — soapy water, no bubbles, at every connection.
- ☐ Cylinder or tank valve fully open.
- ☐ Hose laid out without kinks or sharp bends.
- ☐ Generator's fuel selector confirmed set to propane.

✓ **Thirty seconds, every time**

This check takes less time than reading this page. Make it as automatic as buckling a seatbelt.

Disconnecting Safely When You're Done

Taking a hookup apart deserves the same care as putting it together.

- Stop the generator and let it cool before touching any fuel connection.
- Close the tank or cylinder valve fully first.
- Then disconnect the hose fitting, and cap or protect the open connection if it'll be off for a while.

Closing the valve before you disconnect is the step people are most tempted to skip — it only takes a second, and it's worth never skipping.

✓ Store the hose coiled, not kinked

A gently coiled hose lasts longer and is easier to deal with next time than one crammed into a bag in a tangle.

Common Fitting Mistakes

Almost every hookup problem traces back to one of these.

- **Cross-threading a POL fitting** by turning it the wrong way — remember, it's reverse-threaded, which trips people up at first.
- **Forcing an ACME nut** that isn't seated straight, instead of backing off and trying again.
- **Using a cracked or old hose** because “it worked last time” — hoses do wear out.
- **Skipping the leak check** because you're in a hurry — it's the single most common shortcut, and the easiest one to avoid.

Every one of these is avoidable simply by going slow and not forcing anything that doesn't want to seat.

★ If a fitting won't cooperate

Stop rather than force it. A stuck or cross-threaded fitting is a quick fix for someone who does this often, and a frustrating one if you keep pushing on your own.

A Simple Hookup Checklist to Keep With the Generator

Print this page, or just remember the shape of it.

- ☐ Valve closed before connecting anything.
- ☐ Hose and regulator matched to your tank's fitting type.
- ☐ Every connection checked with soapy water — no bubbles.
- ☐ Valve opened slowly, generator selector confirmed on propane.
- ☐ Closed and disconnected the same careful way when you're done.

✓ Tape a copy to the hose tote

A laminated copy right where the hose lives means you're never relying on memory alone, especially in the dark.

When to Give Me a Call

Most small hookups you can manage yourself — but a few moments are worth handing off.

- Walking through your very first cylinder hookup together, so it's second nature after.
- Coordinating a professional hookup to a big yard tank.
- Sorting out a fitting that won't seat or a connection that won't stop bubbling.
- Choosing the right hose, regulator, or fitting type for a tank you're unsure about.
- A yearly check-up that includes testing your propane connection.

I come to you, here in Portage County and nearby, and I explain everything in plain language at whatever pace suits you.

★ Bill's Home Tech

Call or text (330) 200-8042. Tech Made Simple, Service Made Personal. Every visit is \$99 flat and 30-day come-back-free.

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Dog-ear this page. It's the fast answer to what comes up most with a propane hookup.

I want to...	Remember this
Connect a small cylinder	Valve closed, attach hose, soapy-water check, open valve slowly
Tell POL from ACME	POL = reverse-thread hand-tight nut; ACME = hand-wheel coupling
Check for a leak	Soapy water only — bubbles mean stop and reseal
Hook up a big yard tank	Call a propane supplier or licensed gas fitter — not DIY
Disconnect safely	Stop engine, cool, close valve first, then disconnect
Stay safe from CO	Outdoors only, 20+ feet from the house, alarms working inside
Get help	Call Bill: (330) 200-8042

Words People Use

A few hookup-specific terms, in everyday language.

Q: POL fitting

The common reverse-threaded, hand-tight fitting found on most upright propane cylinders.

Q: ACME fitting

A round, hand-wheel style fitting common on hose kits and quick-connect setups.

Q: Regulator

The device that steps propane down from tank pressure to the steady, safe pressure a generator's engine needs.

Q: Quick-connect

A tool-free fitting that lets a hose attach or detach from a tank or supply line with a simple push and twist.

Q: Sediment / drip trap

A small fitting on a fixed propane line that catches debris and moisture before it reaches the generator.

Q: Leak-check

Testing a connection with soapy water — bubbles reveal a leak that needs tightening or reseating.

Q: Carbon monoxide (CO)

The invisible, odorless gas in engine exhaust that can kill. The reason a generator must always run far outdoors.

Connecting a Cylinder, Start to Finish

The same safe order, every time

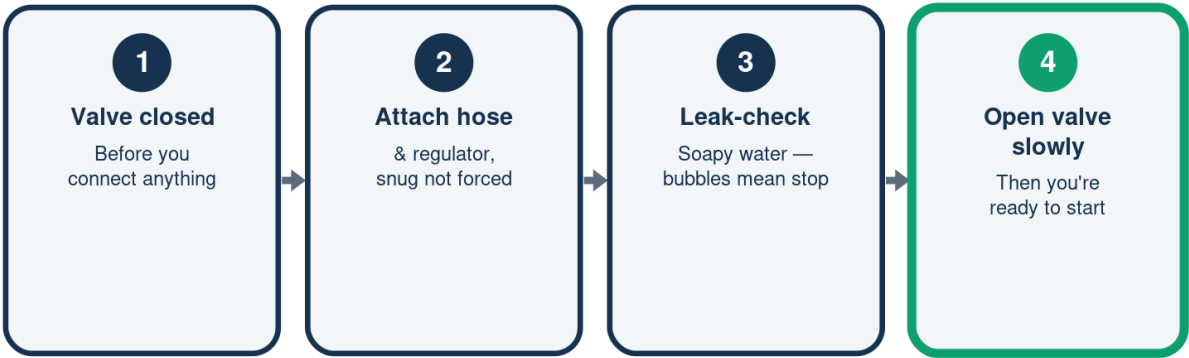


Illustration - a schematic, not to scale. Your setup may differ.

POL vs. ACME Fittings

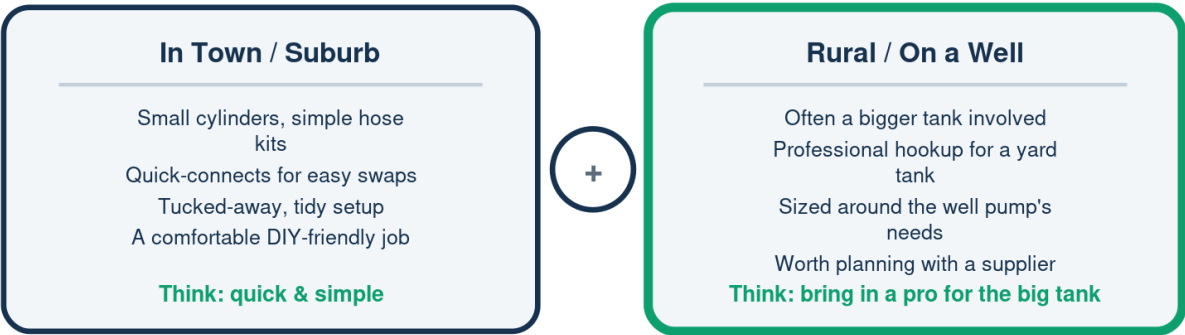
Two common ways a hose attaches

	POL Fitting	ACME Fitting
Common on	Upright cylinders	Hose kits & quick-connects
Turns like	A reverse-thread nut	A hand-wheel coupling
Feels like	Hand-tight, then snug	A garden-hose-style twist

Illustration - a schematic, not to scale. Your setup may differ.

Town Hookups vs. Country Hookups

Same parts, different scale

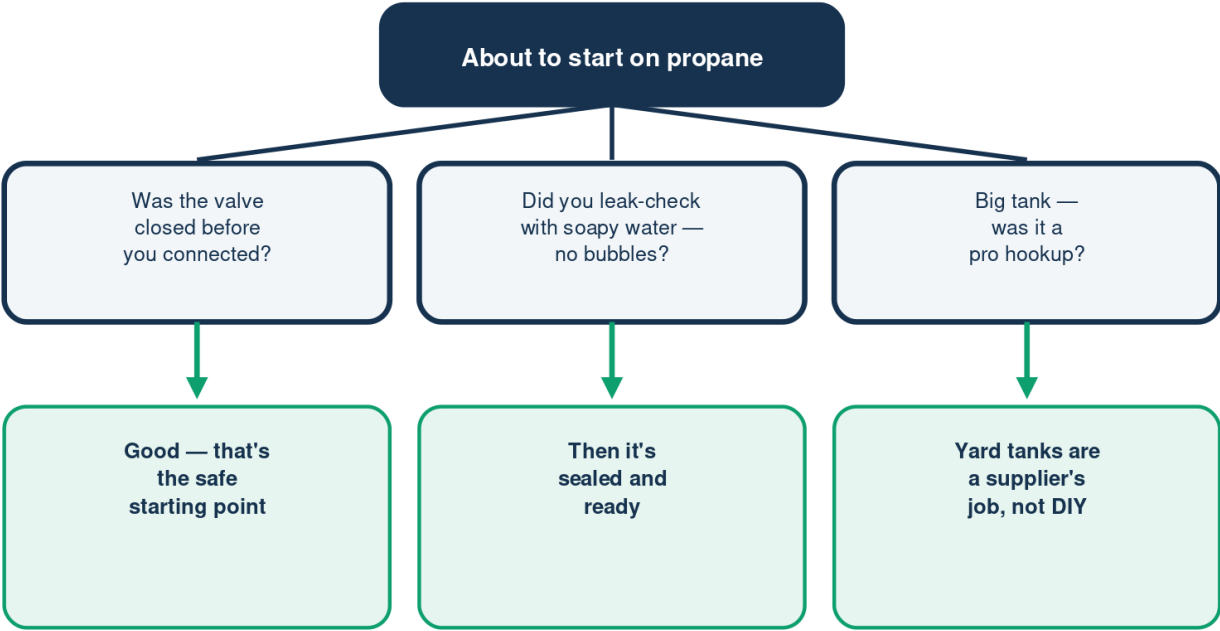


Same basic parts — different scale

Illustration - a schematic, not to scale. Your setup may differ.

Is Your Hookup Ready to Start?

Three checks before you fire it up



Never check for a leak with a flame — always soapy water, and never force a fitting.

Illustration - a schematic, not to scale. Your setup may differ.



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— Bill

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A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill.

I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that comes from using these guides. Thanks for reading, and stay safe out there.

— *Bill*



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