

Use of Portable Butane Cartridge Stoves at Scouting Events

Guidance note for leaders, activity organisers and event catering teams

Key message

Portable butane cartridge stoves are designed for personal, recreational and small-group cooking. In Scouting, they should be limited to individual, patrol and unit-level catering. They should not be used as the primary catering appliance for larger events, where an LPG appliance with a separate gas cylinder, approved hose and regulator is preferred.

Purpose

This guidance note sets out expectations for the safe selection, inspection and use of portable butane cartridge stoves, also commonly known as lunchbox cookers, during Scouting activities. These appliances have known hazards associated with gas leaks, cartridge overheating, fire and explosion.

Scope

- This guidance applies to Scout groups, districts, regions and event teams using portable butane cartridge stoves during Scouting activities.
- It applies to stoves where the butane cartridge is enclosed within, or directly mounted in, the body of the stove.
- It does not replace manufacturer instructions, product recall requirements, applicable law, campsite rules or event-specific risk controls.

Scouts Victoria Position

Approved use with controls

Portable butane cartridge stoves are not prohibited where they are in good condition, not subject to recall, used outdoors, used in accordance with the manufacturer instructions and used only at an appropriate catering scale.

Main Hazards

- **Cartridge overheating:** Oversized cookware, prolonged operation or reflected heat can heat the butane cartridge and increase the risk of fire or explosion.
- **Gas leakage:** Poor cartridge alignment, damaged seals, missing parts or faulty valves can allow butane to leak and ignite.
- **Incorrect assembly:** Removable trivets or pan supports must be fitted correctly and must face upwards where applicable.
- **Indoor or poorly ventilated use:** Gas appliances must not be used inside tents, marquees, buildings, vehicles, caravans or enclosed shelters.
- **Use of recalled appliances:** Some portable butane cookers have been recalled. Recalled appliances must not be used.



Intended Use and Catering Scale

Portable butane cartridge stoves are designed as portable cooking appliances for personal, recreational and small-group use. They are not intended to function as commercial catering equipment or as the primary cooking system for large events.

Use case	Position	Guidance
Individual, hike or lightweight activity cooking	Suitable	Use only where the stove is inspected, stable, outdoors, supervised and operated in accordance with the manufacturer instructions.
Patrol cooking	Suitable with controls	Appropriate where only small quantities are being cooked and each stove is continuously supervised.
Unit-level camps and activities	Suitable with controls	May be used for small-group cooking where cooking duration and cookware size remain within the manufacturer instructions.
District, region, jamboree or major event catering	Not preferred	Do not rely on portable butane cartridge stoves as the primary cooking appliance. Use larger LPG cooking equipment with a separate gas supply where practicable.
Commercial-style or high-volume catering	Do not use	Select catering equipment designed for higher heat loads, longer operating periods and larger cookware.

Preferred Equipment for Larger Events

- For larger catering operations, use LPG appliances supplied from a separate gas cylinder through approved hoses and regulators where practicable.
- The preferred arrangement separates the gas cylinder from the primary heat source and is more suited to longer cooking periods and larger catering loads.
- Event organisers should select equipment based on the number of people being catered for, the expected cooking duration, the size of cookware required and the level of supervision available.



Prohibited Uses

- Using a stove that is damaged, modified, corroded, contaminated or missing components.
- Using a stove that is subject to a product safety recall.
- Using oversized pots, pans, griddles, barbecue plates or any cookware that extends beyond the permitted cooking surface.
- Using foil, windshields, heat shields, hotplates or other arrangements that may reflect heat onto the cartridge compartment.
- Using the stove inside tents, marquees, enclosed shelters, vehicles, caravans, buildings or poorly ventilated areas.
- Refilling disposable butane cartridges.
- Using cartridges that are damaged, rusty, dented, leaking or have been exposed to excessive heat.
- Leaving the stove unattended while operating.

Pre-Use Inspection

Before each use, the supervising leader or nominated adult must check the following:

Item	What to check	Remove from service if...
Stove body	No damage, deformation, corrosion or missing parts.	Any damage or missing parts are found.
Cartridge compartment	Clean, dry and free from dirt, food residue and debris.	The cartridge cannot be fitted smoothly and correctly.
Locking and eject mechanism	Operates smoothly and releases correctly.	The cartridge can be locked in while misaligned or cannot be released easily.
Seals and O-rings	Present, correctly fitted and free from cracks or visible damage.	A seal or O-ring is missing, cracked, perished or damaged.
Trivet or pan support	Correctly fitted and facing upwards where removable.	The support is missing, damaged or installed incorrectly.

Leak Testing

1. Fit the cartridge strictly in accordance with the manufacturer instructions.
2. Check the cartridge connection using soapy water before ignition.
3. If bubbles appear, disconnect the cartridge immediately.
4. Do not use the stove until the leak has been rectified and the appliance has been rechecked.

Never test for gas leaks using a flame.



Safe Setup and Operation

Setup

- Use outdoors only in a well-ventilated area.
- Place the stove on a firm, level, non-combustible surface.
- Keep the appliance clear of tents, tarps, tablecloths, fuel containers, vegetation and other combustibles.
- Keep spare cartridges away from heat, direct sunlight and ignition sources.
- Have a suitable fire blanket or extinguisher available in the cooking area.

During Operation

- Supervise the stove continuously while it is operating.
- Use only cookware sizes and types permitted by the manufacturer.
- Do not operate continuously for extended periods beyond the manufacturer instructions.
- Stop use immediately if there is a smell of gas, abnormal flame, unusual sound, overheating or difficulty releasing the cartridge.
- Allow the appliance to cool before moving it, storing it or changing cartridges.
- Keep young people clear of the immediate cooking area unless they are directly supervised as part of the activity.

Cartridge Management

- Use only cartridges specified by the stove manufacturer.
- Store cartridges in a cool, dry and well-ventilated place.
- Keep cartridges out of direct sunlight and away from campfires, heaters, stoves and vehicles exposed to heat.
- Remove the cartridge from the stove when the appliance is not in use, where this is required or recommended by the manufacturer.
- Do not puncture, incinerate, refill or reuse disposable cartridges.
- Dispose of empty disposable cartridges in accordance with local council or campsite requirements.

Event Planning Controls

- Include the use of portable butane cartridge stoves in the activity or event risk assessment.
- Define who is authorised to use the stoves and who will supervise cooking.
- Check the suitability of the cooking equipment against expected participant numbers and cooking duration.
- For larger events, specify the use of LPG appliances with separate gas cylinders, approved hoses and regulators unless there is a documented reason for using smaller portable stoves.
- Before major activities, check the make and model of each stove against current product recall information.
- Brief leaders and youth members on the key controls before cooking commences.



Incident Response

- If a leak is suspected, turn off the stove and disconnect the cartridge if safe to do so.
- Move people away from the immediate area and remove ignition sources where safe.
- If a fire occurs, use a fire blanket or suitable extinguisher only if it is safe to do so.
- Call 000 for any fire, burn injury, explosion, continuing leak or uncontrolled situation.
- Report incidents and near misses through the Scouts Victoria incident reporting process.

Sources and Reference Material

This guidance note has been compiled from the following source material and contextual information:

- Energy Safe Victoria, Safety alert for butane cookers, published 9 February 2024.
- Energy Safe Victoria, Gas and LPG safety outdoors, reviewed 14 October 2025.
- Product Safety Australia, Companion Portable Butane Stoves single and dual burner recall information.
- Gas Technical Regulators Committee, Technical Guidance Bulletin 010, Portable butane stoves incorporating enclosed gas cartridges, dated 1 January 2017.
- Scouts Victoria internal correspondence and incident context about butane cartridge stove use and known near-miss experience.

Notes on Use

- This is a guidance note, not a substitute for legal advice, manufacturer instructions or regulator directions.
- Recall status may change. Leaders and event organisers should check current product recall information before use.
- Where local campsite rules, event rules or regulator requirements are stricter than this guidance, the stricter requirement should be followed.

For more information or suggestions please contact:

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