



# Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Letter to the Editor

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## CAP: Mandatory Safety Standards for Cooking Gas Cylinders

The Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) calls on the authorities to come out with mandatory safety standards for cooking gas cylinders. The call is made in response to the numerous injuries and deaths that occurred due to explosions caused by cooking gas cylinders.

The latest occurred last Sunday night (30th July), when a couple from Johor, was injured in a cooking gas explosion.

Following is the list of cooking gas cylinders accidents and fatalities that have occurred over the years:

- In March 2023, a couple's sahur (pre-dawn meal) plans were left in tatters after the gas cylinder exploded in their home in Sabah's east coast Tawau district, the explosion caused substantial damage to their home.
- In February 2023, a woman died after being seriously injured in an explosion involving a cooking gas cylinder in her home in Bayan Lepas Penang.
- In December 2022, a woman suffered serious burns to her body after a gas cylinder exploded in her house in Tasek Gelugor, Penang. In the incident, the victim was about to light a fire when the gas cylinder suddenly exploded.
- In May, 2022, a family of five suffered injuries in an explosion believed to have been caused by cooking gas leakage at their home in Nibong Tebal Penang.
- In August 2021, a doctor died after three weeks in hospital following an explosion caused by a gas leak at his home in Penang.
- In May 2021 a man was killed when a gas tank in a workshop exploded in Pantai Remis, Perak.
- In September, 2017, eight foreign workers were injured when a cooking gas cylinder exploded at the warehouse in Subang, Kuala Lumpur.
- In November 2014, a woman involved in a cooking gas tank explosion in Klang, died after 8 days in hospital.

While the number might seem marginal, the irreparable damages and casualties wrought by these fires should not be taken lightly—especially more so when such incidents could easily happen to any household or commercial establishment, sooner than one can think.

According to a doctor, gas explosions are currently one of the most common reasons for admissions to the nation's burns units, and because of the complexity and severity of such cases the majority have to be managed in the government hospitals, requiring high intensive care. The mortality rate for gas explosion accidents is very high, and roughly corresponds with the surface area of the body involved, for example if it is an 80% the mortality is as high as 80%.

In most cases if the victim is able to survive the first 24 hours they will encounter multi-organ complications, infection and organ failure, which all accounts for the high mortality.

In cases where the victim survives, hospitalisation is often for a period of six months or more, with lengthy rehabilitation post discharge, and if they are ever able to resume work it will be a long time.

Cooking gas is odourless but mercaptan (a pungent-smelling odorant) is added to it, so that leaks become detectable. In a gas explosion, the leak can occur at the cylinder valve, or in the connecting rubber hose, or at the oven valve. Each type of leak needs to be treated differently.

Almost every Malaysian household has at least one stove which uses gas (in cylinders) for cooking. Even though it has been in widespread use by consumers in Malaysia for more than 50 years there is not much information and education available for consumers on the proper use and maintenance for cooking gas cylinders. And many of the cylinders used may be old, rusted and poorly maintained.

In view of the danger of gas cylinders explosion, CAP calls on the authorities to:

- Make it mandatory for cylinders to carry an expiry date for the cylinder, valve, hose and regulator.
- Have regular inspections on the gas cylinders used.
- Ensure that all parts including the rubber O-ring conform to Standards.
- Establish an agency for testing the cylinder and other related items.
- Establish a regulatory agency for the cooking gas industry.
- Make it mandatory for hawker stalls and food outlets to have fire extinguishers on hand.
- Promote gas safety awareness.

Where consumers are concerned they should:

- Keep their kitchens clean as oily surfaces catch fire easily.
- Check the condition of the gas cylinder before using. Pay attention to the rubber seal inside the cylinder head (after the cap is removed). The seal prevents leaks after the regulator is inserted.
- Replace the hoses and clips every two years, and the regulators, every five years.
- Avoid over boiling from pots. Spilled soup/gravy can get into/block the gas flame holes.
- Well-ventilate the cooking area.
- Do not put weights like heavy books on top of the tank's regulator if the gas is not released. If this occurs it is time to change the regulator.
- Turn off the gas source and DO NOT SWITCH ON any electrical devices if there is a gas smell. This will prevent electrical sparks from setting the gas on fire or causing an explosion.

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