

# Embracing the Strategic Challenges Of Propane Supply

**A**s account manager, sales representative, and terminal manager for Turner Gas Co., which is headquartered in Salt Lake City, Utah, Lisa Jennings enjoys strategic challenges. She has used her skills to keep her customers supplied with propane. She does that while maneuvering through the most challenging supply situations such as extreme cold weather.

"Applying strategic thinking to logistics ensures the customers are always supplied and we take care of their needs," explained Jennings, who oversees the territory of Utah, Nevada, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, and California for Turner Gas. "I'm constantly looking at strategies for getting their product to them in a cost-effective and timely manner."

Those tactics include looking at all the various supply points of Turner Gas, which describes itself as one of the largest independent transporters and marketers of wholesale propane in the western and north-central U.S. regions. The company also claims that it is one of the largest independent transporters and fastest-growing marketers focused on natural gas liquids in the Bakken and Niobrara oilfield plays.

To help improve on those strategies, Turner Gas in 2014 contracted with Magnum NGLs' underground storage caverns (Delta, Utah) to store a large volume of propane to use for winter supply challenges (*BPN*, May 2014, p. 34). Jennings expects the Magnum deal to be a big help to Turner Gas this winter.

Although last winter was difficult, Jennings enjoyed the challenge of finding ways to get propane to customers who needed it. "There were many early mornings where I was contacting suppliers and asking for extra product just to find propane anywhere I could," she noted. Turner Gas' diversity of suppliers, storage locations, and transportation assets helped. The company's truck fleet includes more than 50 LPG transports that move 9000 to 14,000 gallons per load, and Turner also operates NGL rail terminals in Nevada, Wyoming, and Montana. It recently purchased a fully functional NGL rail storage facility in Shoshoni, Wyo.

Jennings runs one of those NGL rail terminals, located in Hazen, Nev. A terminal manager oversees operations there and Jennings manages the supply, negotiates contracts, and also manages supply for other Turner Gas storage locations.

She describes her role at Turner Gas as handling customer marketing and relations, coordinating logistics such as truck and rail, terminal management, inventory management, supply, and contract negotiations with customers. Her responsibilities have grown substantially since she started at Turner Gas as an inside sales representative about 11 years ago. When she joined the company, she already had more than 18 years of experience managing customer service for small and large corporations.

"What's made Turner as a family business successful is they diversified, and even though they have grown and expanded to where they are today, they're still small enough that family and their employees are important, and I think that carries over to our drivers. They give exceptional customer service." She believes customer service is one of the reasons the company has remained in business for 75 years, a milestone it celebrated in 2014.

Her existing customers are primarily propane retailers, but also include large commercial accounts and even mines. Turner counts as clients some of the largest gold and other commodity mines, which use propane to heat and power the mining operations as well as provide heating for the facilities. Propane-fired boilers are used in the process of recovering the commodities.

Jennings also appreciates the opportunity to serve the propane industry. She is a Utah and Nevada state director for the National Propane Gas Association, serves as a director for the Nevada Propane Dealers Association and the Rocky Mountain Propane Gas Association, and is also a member of the Western Propane Gas Association. Supply is currently a main area of focus for the associations, and she has considerable knowledge and experience

to offer as a wholesaler. She can provide anecdotes about how she has met supply challenges over the years, and enjoyed it.

"If a wrench is thrown into the process, I look at other possibilities as far as our diversity and supply and where our trucks are located. We're always looking at where our supply points are as well as our trucking, and we factor in where the customers are on their volume, so we may have to change schedules accordingly. We're always looking at solutions to get the customers their propane, even if there's a situation where it may be weather- or supply-related."

—Daryl Lubinsky

## Women in Propane

