

Cooking with gas

While cooking with gas is an essential and fun part of the camping experience, safety should always come first. This is why The Scout Association has introduced a new policy to stop using pierceable gas cartridges. By Stuart Carter

Scout Insurance Services Ltd monitors every accident notification made under Association rules. One of the reasons for this is to identify patterns or trends in order to inform and advise the Movement.

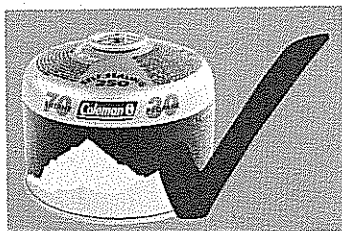
Over the last few years, there have been a number of serious incidents involving the use of gas cookers and lanterns which employ pierceable cartridges. Equipment of this type, often referred to as 'Bluet', were among the earliest examples of personal, lightweight cookers and lanterns. As such, much of this equipment held by Groups may be over 30 years old.

Over the last 10 years or so, these have been superseded by lightweight aluminium cartridges which incorporate a screw or clip valve fitting. These can be fitted and removed repeatedly, with minimal risk of escaping gas. The old type of cartridge was pierced by a spike in the appliance. Once pierced, the canister could not safely be removed until empty.

The risks

Age, lack of familiarity and misuse are the main risks. Examples are:

- Extracting a 'spent' cartridge and attempting to 'screw' in a replacement without removing the burner assembly.



- Screwing in a burner assembly 'cross threaded' which pierces the cartridge without being able to screw right down to form a seal.
- Old equipment where the rubber seal has become damaged or perished, preventing a good, gas tight, seal.

In all these cases, leaking gas can be the result and, due to the lack of a valve, the leak cannot be stopped. The results have been serious burn injuries to users and those nearby.

For these reasons, The Scout Association is taking the unusual step in strongly advising Groups to cease using equipment which employs pierceable cartridges.

It is appreciated that this will require Groups to replace older equipment and that this has

cost implications. However, the evidence of risk is overwhelming.

Obviously, equipment cannot be replaced overnight and some of this type may have to be used in the short term. Where this cannot be avoided, Leaders are advised to check carefully to ensure that seals are in good condition and should record the inspection. In addition, use of such equipment should be closely supervised and, above all, cartridge changes and assembly should only be undertaken by adults in the open and away from sources of ignition.

All cooking and lighting equipment utilising flammable gases or liquids are potentially dangerous but, with care, can be used safely. However, pierceable cartridge equipment has been shown to present unique hazards, not only within Scouting but for the general public as well.

Groups are recommended to cease using such equipment and to implement a policy of replacement within 12 months at the latest. Scout Shops Ltd have a range of newer, low-cost alternatives, available at highly competitive rates (www.scouts.org.uk/shop).



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