

Inspection of Supply and Distribution of Domestic LPG Cylinder Weights in Thimphu (January 21 – February 3, 2025)

Background

The Consumer and Competition Affairs Authority (CCAA), in collaboration with the Regional Office of Industry, Commerce, and Employment (ROICE) Thimphu, conducted a series of random inspections to assess the accuracy of the weights of domestic LPG cylinders distributed by retail outlets and home delivery agents.

Thimphu has 22 registered home delivery agents, 4 LPG retail outlets, and 1 commercial/industrial cylinder distributor. Domestic LPG cylinders are intended for household use, while commercial/industrial cylinders are supplied to businesses such as restaurants, hotels, and small industries.

Methods and Materials

The inspection covered four retail outlets located in Motithang (BOD), Chubachu & Langdro (DPCL), and Changzamtog (DPDCL), as well as eight randomly selected home delivery agents during their LPG cylinder deliveries to consumers. Over 300 domestic LPG cylinders were inspected, comparing their actual weight to the declared weight printed on the cylinder. This included 182 subsidized cylinders and 121 non-subsidized cylinders.

The inspection also focused on ensuring that suppliers and distributors used properly calibrated weighing machines and issued purchase receipts to consumers.

Findings & Observations

- Issuance of Receipts:

The majority of home delivery agents did not issue purchase receipts or cash memos to consumers, and some did not even possess purchase receipts. According to Section 134(4) of the Trade and Industry Rules, 2023, all delivery agents are required to "issue proper money receipts to customers upon delivery of services."

- Lack of Weighing Machines:

None of the home delivery agents were found carrying weighing machines during delivery, despite this being a mandatory requirement under Section 134(5) of the Trade and Industry Rules, 2023.

- Improper Storage:

Several home delivery agents were found keeping both filled and empty domestic LPG cylinders in their vehicles overnight, violating the storage protocols outlined in the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the Storage and Handling of LPG Cylinders, 2022.

Immediate Actions

A total fine of Nu. 32,967 was imposed on two LPG retail outlets and two home delivery agents for distributing LPG cylinders that were below the specified weight. These violators received administrative warnings, and further actions will be taken in the event of repeat violations, in accordance with the applicable rules.

Recommendations

- The Department of Trade and ROICEs should ensure that the regulations regarding LPG supply and delivery, as outlined in the Trade & Industry Rules, 2023, are enforced.
- The ROICEs should on a regular basis remind all home delivery agents and impress upon them the importance to ensuring adherence to the rules.
- The ROICEs should re-verify the number of cylinders held by home delivery agents and take necessary actions to address any improper stocking practices.
- The CCAA and ROICEs should conduct more frequent inspections in their respective jurisdictions to identify and address any violations that affect consumers promptly.
- The CCAA should educate consumers about the importance of verifying the weight of LPG cylinders at the time of delivery or purchase. Consumers should also be encouraged to request proper purchase receipts and report any violations to the CCAA. Consumer cooperation is essential, as home delivery agents are often difficult to locate due to their mobile nature and lack of fixed business premises.

Inspection Team:

- *Deki Choden, Inspector, CPCED, CCAA*
- *Yeshi Dema, Inspector, CPCED, CCAA*
- *Pema, Inspector, CPCED, CCAA*
- *Phub Tshering, ROICE, Thimphu*