

Australian Standard™

**The storage and handling of liquefied
natural gas**

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The following are represented on Committee ME-070:

Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Department of Employment, Education and Training, N.T.
The Australian Gas Association

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**The storage and handling of liquefied
natural gas**

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PREFACE

This Standard was prepared by the Standards Australia Committee ME-070, Liquefied Natural Gas—Storage and Handling in response to requests from authorities and industries to review and supersede AS 3961—1991.

The objective of this Standard is to provide requirements for the design, construction and operation of installations for the storage and handling of liquefied natural gas (LNG), covering installations of atmospheric-type tanks for supplying marine terminals, pipeline peak saving, and pressure tanks.

This edition is technically equivalent to that published in 1991. However, referenced documents have been revised and updated, and minor editorial changes have been made to reflect the style of more recent Australian Standards for the storage and handling of dangerous goods.

This Standard has been modelled on two other Australian Standards. AS/NZS 1596, *The storage and handling of LP Gas*, was used because of the similarities between LP Gas and LNG. AS 1940, *The storage and handling of flammable and combustible liquids*, was also used, as atmospheric LNG storage has similarities with flammable liquids storage. Expertise from the cryogenics industry has also been valuable. Liquefied natural gas has many unique properties requiring specific safety measures. This Standard is therefore based on an amalgamation of requirements drawn from various sources, but tailored to suit the particular safety issues of LNG.

The Standard has been arranged to cater for the distinctions between the two basic types of LNG storage and handling systems, being pressure tanks and road or rail tankers, and atmospheric tanks for marine and pipeline transport systems.

The terms ‘normative’ and ‘informative’ have been used in this Standard to define the application of the appendix to which they apply. A ‘normative’ appendix is an integral part of a Standard, whereas an ‘informative’ appendix provides information and guidance only.

The series of Standards covering the storage and handling of dangerous goods presently comprises the following Standards:

AS

- 1894 The storage and handling of non-flammable cryogenic and refrigerated liquids
- 1940 The storage and handling of flammable and combustible liquids
- 2507 The storage and handling of agricultural and veterinary chemicals
- 2714 The storage and handling of hazardous chemical materials—Class 5.2 substances (organic peroxides)
- 3780 The storage and handling of corrosive substances
- 3846 The handling and transport of dangerous cargoes in port areas
- 4326 The storage and handling of oxidizing agents
- 4332 The storage and handling of gases in cylinders

AS/NZS

- 1596 The storage and handling of LP Gas
- 2022 Anhydrous ammonia—Storage and handling
- 2927 The storage and handling of liquefied chlorine gas

AS/NZS

- 3833 The storage and handling of mixed classes of dangerous goods in packages and intermediate bulk containers
- 4081 The storage and handling of liquid and liquefied polyfunctional isocyanates
- 4452 The storage and handling of toxic substances
- 4681 The storage and handling of Class 9 (miscellaneous) dangerous goods and articles

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
FOREWORD.....	6
SECTION 1 SCOPE AND GENERAL	
1.1 SCOPE AND APPLICATION.....	9
1.2 REFERENCED DOCUMENTS	9
1.3 DEFINITIONS	9
SECTION 2 GENERAL INSTALLATION REQUIREMENTS	
2.1 SCOPE OF SECTION	13
2.2 TANKS.....	13
2.3 PRESSURE AND VACUUM RELIEF	13
2.4 GAUGES AND CONTROLS	14
2.5 PLANT EMERGENCY SHUTDOWN SYSTEMS	15
2.6 LOCATIONS.....	16
2.7 POTENTIAL FLAME IMPINGEMENT	20
2.8 ROAD AND RAIL TANKER TRANSFER INSTALLATIONS	20
2.9 PIPING, VALVES AND ACCESSORIES.....	22
2.10 INSULATION	24
2.11 VAPORIZER DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION	24
2.12 VAPORIZER INSTALLATION.....	25
2.13 PUMPS AND COMPRESSORS.....	25
2.14 SECURITY AND DAMAGE PROTECTION	27
2.15 EARTHING AND BONDING	27
2.16 PERSONNEL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT	27
2.17 LADDERS, STEPS, AND PLATFORMS	28
2.18 ODORIZERS.....	28
2.19 MARKINGS AND NOTICES	28
2.20 LIGHTING	28
SECTION 3 PRESSURE TANK STORAGES	
3.1 SCOPE OF SECTION	29
3.2 TANK DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION	29
3.3 CONTROLS AND GAUGES	29
3.4 LOCATION AND INSTALLATION	30
SECTION 4 ATMOSPHERIC TANK STORAGES	
4.1 SCOPE OF SECTION	32
4.2 TANK DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION	32
4.3 GAUGES AND CONTROLS	32
4.4 LOCATION AND INSTALLATION	33
4.5 SPILLAGE CONTAINMENT AND CONTROL	33
4.6 MARINE TRANSFER INSTALLATIONS	35

SECTION 5 AUTOMOTIVE REFUELLING STATIONS

5.1	SCOPE OF SECTION	37
5.2	CONTROL OF IGNITION SOURCES	37
5.3	TANK AND PIPING	37
5.4	FILLING AREA	37
5.5	DISPENSERS.....	38
5.6	NOTICES, SIGNS, AND INSTRUCTIONS.....	38

SECTION 6 OPERATIONS

6.1	SCOPE OF SECTION	40
6.2	ESTABLISHMENT OF PROCEDURES	40
6.3	SUPERVISION	43
6.4	RECORDS.....	43
6.5	COMPLIANCE WITH PROCEDURES	43
6.6	SPECIFIC OPERATING PROCEDURES.....	43
6.7	MAINTENANCE, INSPECTION AND TESTING	44
6.8	TANK TRANSPORT OR REMOVAL.....	47
6.9	ROAD TANKER OPERATION	47
6.10	GENERAL PRECAUTIONS FOR BULK TRANSFER.....	48
6.11	SUPERVISION OF TRANSFER.....	49
6.12	TRANSFER PROCEDURES	50
6.13	MARINE TRANSFER	51
6.14	AUTOMOTIVE-REFUELLING STATION OPERATIONS.....	51

SECTION 7 FIRE SAFETY

7.1	SCOPE OF SECTION	52
7.2	DESIGN REQUIREMENTS	52
7.3	DETAILED REQUIREMENTS	53

APPENDICES

A	LIST OF REFERENCED DOCUMENTS	56
B	METHOD FOR THE DETERMINATION OF HOLDING TIME.....	58
C	CHARACTERISTICS OF LNG	60
D	TANK AND CYLINDER LOCATIONS.....	62
E	HAZARDOUS ZONES	63
F	TRANSFER CONNECTION.....	65
G	MAXIMUM FILLING LEVEL OF PRESSURE TANKS	66
H	NOTICE OF EMERGENCY PROCEDURES FOR LNG.....	67
I	TYPICAL EXAMPLE OF WORK PERMIT	68

FOREWORD

FIRE SAFETY

General considerations

Fire safety is a critical aspect of any Standard that deals with the safe handling of flammable materials, and such a Standard usually incorporates a comprehensive section that requires the traditional firefighting implements, e.g. hoses, hydrants, extinguishers, and the like. Habit and instinct tend to lead the thinking towards the provision of the same equipment for LNG, on the grounds that if a fire is possible, one must provide means for fighting it, and this is the way it is done.

However, the fire characteristics of gases, particularly LNG, differ radically from those of solids and liquids, so that conventional firefighting methods and equipment are not often useful and can in some situations be counter-productive. The provision of inappropriate equipment not only represents a misdirection of effort, but more seriously a false sense of security can be generated, leading personnel to place themselves in danger.

Essential to the consideration of safety in a gaseous fire is that uncontrolled drifting vapour is very mobile; unlike liquids or solids it may travel to an ignition source. Once gas has escaped, dissipation before reaching an ignition source is the only hope of safety. Separation distances, and the control and elimination of possible ignition sources, are aimed at this aspect.

If escaped gas ignites, there are two problems. Water streams will not readily extinguish such a fire, and in any case to extinguish the flame while leaving the escape flowing sets up a very considerable risk of potential re-ignition.

The only satisfactory means of stopping a gaseous fire is to shut off the fuel supply, so the design must incorporate sufficient isolating facilities to cope with any predictable event. However such facilities merely represent a cure after the event, and the principal objective must be prevention, i.e. the intent should be that escapes never happen and the escape-control measures never have to be used.

Thus the engineering of the whole installation becomes the critical fire safety provision. The first precautionary element in the design is the engineering of all the components to minimize the possibility that any failure may lead to an escape. The next element is a system of valves to control all outflow of LNG (whether liquid or vapour). These valves should be capable of shutting off flow, preferably automatically, should an incident occur.

Catchments are provided for certain types of tank to hold any possible spillage of liquid. Any substantial spill of liquid will form a pool, but the liquid has a fairly high evaporation rate, so that it is desirable to keep the surface area of the pool as small as possible to minimize the rate of vapour generation.

It is traditional to spread foam on petrol spillages to blanket the surface and inhibit evaporation, thus reducing the vapour cloud and reducing the possibility of ignition. Foam is not as effective on LNG, because of the interface between the warm foam and the cryogenic LNG, increasing evaporation and breaking through the foam. Thus a further reason for keeping the surface areas of spillage catchments as small as possible is to optimize the thickness of the foam blanket, so that the barrier to heat radiated into the pool, and the general insulating effect on the pool, is as effective as possible.

Should a compound catch fire, little can be done to fight it. Foam is ineffective and water streams will increase the problem by increasing the evaporation rate. All that can be done is protect nearby installations and property from the high level of radiated heat.