

MEC EMERGES AS THE INDUSTRY LEADER IN LP GAS

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It was tough times that first brought Marshall Excelsior Co. (MEC) and the RV world together. When a local LP gas supplier shuttered its doors in the midst of the Great Recession, a void was created in the industry.

Already known as a leading manufacturer of fittings, valves, regulators, hoses and a variety of other parts for the LP gas, natural gas, and anhydrous markets, it wasn't long before dealers and distributors turned to MEC hoping the company would step up to the plate.

MEC did just that about five years back and hasn't looked back since.

"We serve everything from the OEMs to the distributor, to the dealer, to the end user," says Jason Peck, National Account Manager. "We try to help everybody out the whole way."

Part of MEC's strength is its ability to tailor-make products for specific applications in order to achieve higher performance. For example, an RV could have two furnaces, an on-demand water heater, a stove and a fridge – all things that run off of propane – or the RV could just have a small stove and fridge. In such cases, one of those RVs might have 150,000 BTUs and the other might have 40,000 BTUs.

"We don't feel that you can use the same regulator for both applications," Peck says. "We're trying to customize what you're using on your unit to get better performance."

As a result, MEC has come up with regulators designed for small, standard and large RVs depending on the number of appliances and their BTU load, dialing in to achieve the best, most consistent and most constant pressure. This is what allows appliances to run more effectively and last longer, Peck says, but no one else is currently doing that. Instead, the current industry norm is more of a one-size-fits-all mentality.

Product testing and quality assurance is another element that sets MEC apart. While many manufacturers perform batch tests on their products, MEC tests 100% of production in a facility that is the only one of its kind in the nation.

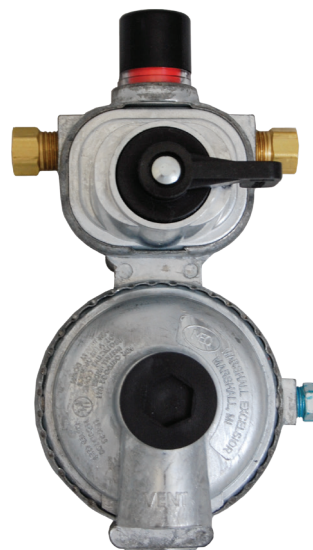
"We run all of our product R&D testing on LP gas whereas our competitors use air or water," Peck notes.

Founded in 1976, MEC's family-owned and operated dynamic allows the company to react faster than many larger corporations or businesses located overseas, and there's also plenty of opportunities for one-on-one interaction with customers, who are always welcome to stop by and visit the company's facilities in Marshall, Michigan.

A Strong Focus on Technician Training

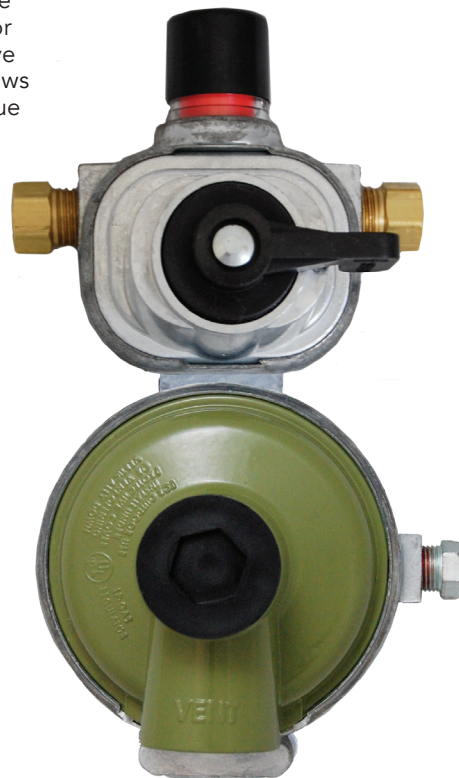
Yet another differentiator that sets MEC apart from the pack is its dedication to education, working with and helping not just the OEMs but also the dealership technicians that work on them. MEC reaches out to RV technicians to provide a free two-hour training class that is approved and certified through the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA) and the Recreational Vehicle Aftermarket Association (RVAA).

The intent is to provide techs with a more in-depth knowledge and understanding of how the whole LP gas system works, what can interfere with it, and what they can do to troubleshoot in order to determine if any given issue is an LP gas problem or an appliance issue. Not only does it solve plenty of warranty issues, but it also allows MEC to learn from the techs and continue to develop newer, better products.



MEGR-253

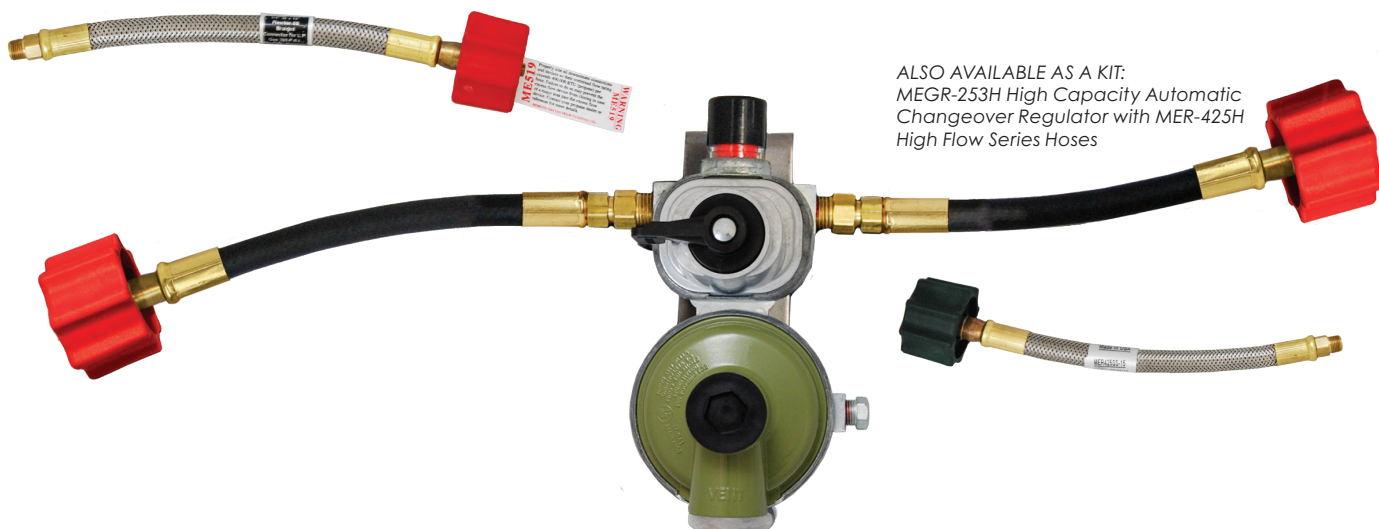
MEC's line of Excela-Flo Auto Changeover Regulators



MEGR-253H
(High Capacity)



MEGR-253L
(Low Capacity)



ALSO AVAILABLE AS A KIT:
MEGR-253H High Capacity Automatic
Changeover Regulator with MER-425H
High Flow Series Hoses

The class covers a wide range of industry issues, including: an overview of how auto regulators and pigtails work and function; an explanation of the proper way to perform leak, flow and lock-up tests; a description of the devices best used and the ideal spots to hook up when performing those tests; a review of the vaporization rates of cylinder tanks, and more.

During the training, "MEC's staff encourages participants to look back in time. Thirty years ago, a basic trailer would run off a 15-amp service", Peck says. Then, as more appliances and other features were added, a 30-amp service became typical, and then a 50-amp service. Now, 50-amp service won't work, so management systems have emerged.

The same goes for LP gas. As trailers improve and more features have been added in, it is only natural for the LP systems to change and evolve as well.

"They have to change, they have to grow, and they have to improve to handle everything else that's going on in the systems," Peck says.

RV Problem Solver

Peck notes MEC's extensive line of RV products – roughly 500 SKUs in all – are designed specifically for the RV industry. Since first entering the market, the company has noticed some of the issues caused by the lack of attention devoted to the LP sector in recent years, and as one of the only manufacturers of LP gas products in the United States, MEC has positioned

itself as a business that is poised to take on challenges in order to find and develop solutions that make sense.

A few years back, for example, appliance manufacturers came out with an on-demand, tankless water heater, but when those devices were initially installed in trailers many were failing. As a result, Peck explains, "the OEMs started pulling them out of the units due to the spike in warranty issues".

The problem, it turns out, wasn't with the on-demand water heaters. There simply wasn't enough supply on the LP gas side to handle what the heaters needed to run. MEC was tapped by two of the main water heater suppliers and asked to help with testing efforts. The result was the creation of a high-capacity regulator and connection that would put out a higher BTU and flow rate. Problem solved.

In the past, when an aftermarket LP gas generator was added to a trailer, a designated gas line was needed because the demand required by that generator was more than the standard regulators could put out.

"Again, by using our high flow capacity regulators and high-flow hoses, a tech is now able to install that LP gas generator and switch out the regulator and pigtails to high capacity without the extra time and expense of adding a whole new gas line to it," Peck says.

High-efficiency furnaces have presented yet another challenge to the RV industry because of the highly sensitive pressure settings. Although they are meant to burn less fuel, if the right pressures and setup aren't in place those furnaces will not perform the way they were designed to function. By using MEC's low-capacity, standard or high-capacity regulators, these high-efficiency furnaces are able to run better and perform as intended.

In the past, products like high-efficiency furnaces and on-demand water heaters just didn't exist. All appliances were relatively standard and roughly the same size in all RV units, so one regulator would do the trick in the old days, Peck says, but times have changed. As RV trailers keep advancing and changing and improving that presents opportunities for MEC to develop new equipment and products that improve upon the status quo.

More and more people are recognizing that the combination of high-quality products, the support and backing that comes along with those products, and a good, fair price are tough to beat.

"We pride ourselves in the products we put out," Peck says, "and we pride ourselves in being a step ahead."