

Two wrongs finally made

After getting an expired LPG cylinder twice in two months, Ranjit Jadhavrao filed an RTI application to HPCL and found out all about expiry dates

VISHAKHA SHARMA

After receiving an expired LPG gas cylinder and complaining about the same to Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) on their website, Ranjit S Jadhavrao's expired gas cylinder was replaced immediately. But the same thing was repeated the very next month when he received an expired LPG cylinder again. Disgusted with this fact, Jadhavrao decided to file an RTI application with the HPCL Regional Sales Office at Pune Camp to dig out the truth behind the secret numbers encoded on our domestic use LPG cylinders.

Jadhavrao, who is a resident of Sinhad Road said, "In May 2009, I was delivered a domestic use LPG cylinder with the 'C-08' painted on one of its three 'stay plates' that hold the upper ring. I remembered an article regarding expiry of LPG cylinders published around that time. I lodged a complaint on the HPCL website stating that an expired cylinder has been delivered to me. That same evening, my LPG distributor replaced my faulty cylinder after he received a call from the company."

"But, after a gap of one month, the same thing happened again.

When I spoke with the LPG distributor, his representative blatantly told me that they receive hundreds of cylinders every day and they don't find time to scrutinise the cylinders they receive. This is in direct violation of their dealership contracts with the oil marketing companies. He seemed least bothered about the flaw and total ignorance on their part," he continued.

Jadhavrao said, "I decided to lodge a complaint with the Chief Vigilance Officer (CVO) of HPCL at Mumbai. This was done through the HPCL website in August third week as their website works extremely efficiently. Next day in the afternoon, I was contacted by D T Patil, area sales manager-LPG, HPCL. He suggested that we meet. He explained the practical problems HPCL faces at its Chakan facility and I simply voiced my concerns to him."

"Later to find out about the numbers encoded on the LPG cylinders, I submitted an RTI query to HPCL Regional Sales Office at Pune Camp. The senior regional manager & central Public Information Officer (CPIO) was very helpful in providing information I required," he added.

"One should check all the LPG delivered for testing date marking. You

have the right to reject an expired cylinder delivered to your house. Demand a new valid cylinder and get in touch with Customer Care Manager of the concerned LPG provider company, if denied. You can easily find the contact details from the respective websites of those oil marketing companies. After HPCL, I sent RTI queries to BPCL and IOCL too and found out similar information," said Jadhavrao.

When *Pune Mirror* spoke to D T Patil, he said, "Mixing of expired cylinders with the non-expired ones is a human error which happens very rarely and if it does, we immediately get the expired cylinder replaced with the new one but the customer should bring it to our notice."

"Earlier cylinders used to expire within 5 years but now the new cylinders lapse only after 10 years after which they are removed from the circulation and sent for hydro testing. After hydro testing, cylinders can be used again for circulation," he added. When we asked him about the drawbacks, he said, "Till now there has not been a single case of any accident because of the expired cylinders."

Vijay Naik used the RTI to find out why his bank cut off his capital

NITIN BRAHME

Vijay Naik, co-owner of a small scale unit in Pune, Electrovision, struggled for years to make sense of the 'shock' he received in January 2000, after the Central Bank of India without any reason cancelled the capital limit of Rs 17 lakh extended to his unit. Naik had been a customer of the bank for 15 years.

"In January 2000, a branch manager and four officers of the Central Bank of India regional office suspiciously and suddenly cancelled our entire working capital limit. It was a shock to me. I was working with the

same bank before and knew all the rules and practices at the bank," says Naik.

Naik pursued the matter for five years by submitting three complaints to the

bank's various offices upto the head office. "I approached the complaints redressing authorities (CRA) right upto the Reserve Bank of India. I tried to find out the actual cause of the act and its documentation, but bank officers and executives at the Central Bank of India, including the public information officer (PIO) and appellate authority, suppressed the case and locked the files for 5 years," says Naik.

In year 2005, the RTI Act came into realisation. "The PIO at Central Bank refused my RTI application in writing and so I approached the Appellate Authority. Finally, I approached the CIC in Delhi. However, the CIC dragged its feet and in spite of submitting proof against the bank, they took no action. Just for the simple and legitimate task of allowing me to inspect the files, CIC New Delhi, conducted two unwarranted personal hearings (PH) at Delhi," said Naik.

POWER OF
RTI

The findings of his RTI query are:

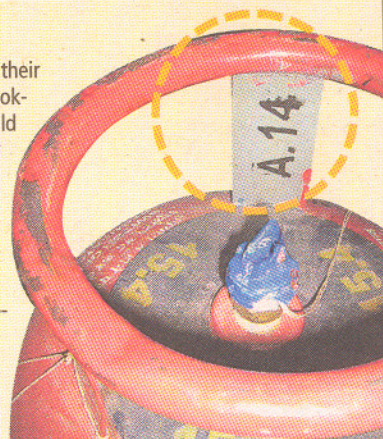
1 The marking 'C-08' or 'B-12' on a LPG cylinder indicates the Quarter and Year when the cylinder shall be due for its statutory testing, which is a very critical test considering the safety of LPG consumers at large. A Year is divided into 4 quarters and is identified as under:

- A - denotes January to March
- B - denotes April to June
- C - denotes July to September
- D - denotes October to December

2 Consumers can book their next refill after receipt of home delivery of their earlier booked cylinder and do not have to wait for next 21

days. Consumers are entitled to get their refill within 3 working days from booking date. However a consumer should be in a position to provide the empty cylinder with the same serial number of the cylinder received as refill delivery earlier.

3 Local LPG distributors have a definite responsibility regarding pre-delivery safety checks at the customer's premises. The company through its training programmes imparts special training.



Do you have similar stories about the power of RTI to share with us? Did the RTI help you right a grievance? Write to us at editfeedback@indiatimes.com.