Gas Explodes After Torch Flames Out

An ironworker was using a blow torch for work inside the bilge area of a construction barge. The flame on the torch failed, but propane continued to leak out of the torch, gathering inside the confined space. An undetermined source of ignition caused the accumulated gas to explode, killing the worker.

A job safety breakdown prior to work start-up would have identified the work area as a confined space and safety precautions could have been taken by all concerned. While this accident happened in a work setting, it could just as easily occur in a home basement workshop. Remember, you need proper ventilation in any area where you are using propane. Make sure the automatic shutoff is working in case the flame fails.