

Press Release

For Immediate Release:
July 2, 2018

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NJ Consumer Affairs' Office of Weights and Measures Announces Results of "Operation Summer Octane" Fuel Quality Inspections Ahead of Busy July 4th Travel Week *Statewide Sweep of Stations Finds Most in Compliance with NJ Motor Fuel Act*

NEWARK – Motorists traveling to New Jersey's beaches, parks, and other spots to celebrate Fourth of July can fuel up with confidence thanks to a statewide inspection of gas stations to ensure consumers get what they pay for at the pumps during the busy holiday week, the New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs announced today.

"Operation Summer Octane," a two-week campaign of unannounced fuel quality tests led by the Division's Office of Weights and Measures ("OWM") tested the quality of gasoline at 371 stations across New Jersey— about 10 percent of the 3,000 licensed stations in the state -- and found only two allegedly selling fuel with octane levels lower than advertised.

"With the busiest travel holiday of the summer upon us, we want motorists to have confidence that when they purchase gasoline at New Jersey stations, they're going to get their money's worth," said Paul R. Rodríguez, Acting Director of the Division of Consumer Affairs. "Operation Summer Octane was a proactive sweep to let stations know we're watching to make sure they're not charging consumers premium prices for low-grade gasoline."

According to the Automobile Club of America ("AAA"), this year's Independence Day holiday gas prices are the highest in four years. In New Jersey, consumers are paying an average of \$2.884 a gallon for regular gasoline and \$3.358 a gallon for premium, a price gap of 47.4 cents a gallon, according to AAA.

"When stations are charging nearly 50 cents a gallon more for premium gasoline the potential for illegal profit can be a temptation for unscrupulous station owners," Rodríguez said "The good news is, our unannounced inspections found that 99 percent of the stations were pumping the proper grade of fuel. The small minority that weren't will be held accountable."

The unannounced inspections, which ran weekdays from June 11 through June 27, were conducted at stations located in all 21 counties within the state, including those on toll roads. An “Octane Task Force” comprised of inspectors from 17 state, county, and municipal Weights and Measures Offices used portable octane testers to field test unleaded gasoline rated from 87, 89, 91, 92, and 93 at each station.

Any fuel sample that appeared to present a violation, presented unclear results, or could not be tested on site for any reason, was sent to a laboratory for comprehensive testing. A total of 7 samples were sent to the labs. Samples from two stations – Runway Gas on Greenwood Avenue in Trenton and USA Gas on Landis Avenue in Vineland -- allegedly failed to deliver the octane levels advertised by the stations.

Operation Summer Octane also resulted in citations against 20 stations for a variety of other alleged violations of OWM and NJ motor fuel laws and regulations:

In Passaic County:

- Rose Fuel, 308 Union Ave., Paterson – Failure to display mid-grade pricing atop fuel dispenser. (6 counts)
- Delta, 216 Redwood Ave., Paterson - Failure to display credit card pricing atop fuel dispenser. (4 counts)

In Somerset County:

- Exxon/Warren Food Inc., 171 Mt Bethel Rd, Warren –Failure to have inspection certificate available. (1 count)

In Morris County:

- Shell/Ellahi Fuel, 411 W Main St., Boonton – Faulty 5-gallon test measure.

In Gloucester County:

- Mobile/Creative Management, 102 N Delsea Dr., Glassboro – Water in storage drop around fuel storage tank. (3 counts)
- Citgo/Clayton Food and Gas, 435 S Delsea Dr., Clayton - Water in storage drop around fuel storage tank. (1 count)

In Atlantic County:

- Riggins/Hammonton Fuel Stop, 12th & Chew Rd, Hammonton - Water in storage drop around fuel storage tank. (1 count)

In Union County:

- Quick Check #90 1999, Routes 1 & 9, Rahway – Faulty or illegible L.E.D. Price Per Gallon signage on fuel dispenser. (10 counts)
- Delta/Sadana Fuel, LLC 104 Westfield Ave., Clark – Pump meter continuing to run after dispensing stops. (3 counts)

- Valero/Khalsa Fuel, LLC, 105 Chestnut St., Roselle, NJ - Faulty or illegible L.E.D. Price Per Gallon signage on marquee. (1 count)
- Delta/A-1 Union Gas, 35 North Ave., Crandford – Unregistered weighing and measuring devices. (18 counts)
- Conoco/Jersey Mart Inc., 419-431 Routes 1 & 9, Elizabeth - Faulty or illegible L.E.D. Price Per Gallon signage on fuel dispenser. (3 counts)

In Middlesex:

- Sunoco #7013, Thomas Edison Service Area, NJTP, Woodbridge - Faulty or illegible L.E.D. Price Per Gallon signage on fuel dispenser.(4 counts)

In Essex County:

- Fuel 4/NCK Fuel, 1126 McCarter Hwy., Newark – Failure to display security seal on fuel dispenser meter. (4 counts) Failure to have 5-gallon test measure on premises. (1 count)
- Speedway, #3485, 895 Springfield Ave., Irvington – No Price Per Gallon signage atop fuel dispenser. (3 counts)
- Delta/G & R Fuel Corporation, 822-828 Clinton Ave., Newark - Faulty or illegible L.E.D. Price Per Gallon signage on fuel dispenser. (9 counts)
- JPG Enterprises, 754 Lyons Rd., Irvington - Faulty or illegible L.E.D. Price Per Gallon signage on fuel dispenser. (2 counts)
- 07205 Management, 242 Elizabeth Ave., Newark - Failure to have 5-gallon test measure on premises. (1 count)
- Saveway LLC, 221 Central Ave., East Orange – No security seal on fuel dispenser meter. (13 counts) Faulty or illegible L.E.D. Price Per Gallon signage on fuel dispenser. (4 counts) Failure to have 5-gallon test measure on premises. (1 count)
- Mobile/1139-1153 Broad St Petroleum, 1139-1153 Broad St., Newark – Improper numeral size on Price Per Gallon signage atop fuel dispenser. (13 counts)

Stations found to be in violation of OWM and NJ motor fuel laws and regulations face civil penalties from \$100 to \$1,500 per violation. Fines are assessed on a case by case basis in relation to the business history, and the severity of the infraction in relation to deceptive business practices.

The Division of Consumer Affairs' Office of Weights and Measures thanks Bergen, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Essex, Mercer, Middlesex, Morris, Ocean, Passaic, Salem, Somerset, Sussex, Union county Offices of Weights and Measures, and the Trenton Office of Weights and Measures, for their participation in this statewide effort.

Octane is a hydrocarbon liquid found in gasoline and other fuels. When octane levels are too low, gasoline can self-ignite during compression, causing much higher pressures than engine components are designed for. This can lead to a persistent knocking sound in the engine and, in severe cases can lead to significant engine damage such as broken connecting rods, melted pistons, or other damaged components. The risk is especially acute with high-performance vehicles for which a higher octane rating is recommended, but can affect any vehicle if the octane level is substandard.

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