Oil Express
exclusive report serving informed petroleum marketers nationwide
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Gasoline Price Barometer

Crude prices leveled off last week, but some grades of gasoline went extra-orbital.

Great Lakes refiners, now in the middle of maintenance cycles, struggled to make enough RBOB, and the reformulated grade spiked to $3.65/gal. The U.S. Gulf Coast saw similar action. Crude oil prices backed off some $2-$4/bbl from recent highs, but Gulf Coast RBOB hit $3.40/gal. In both markets, the cost of conventional blends of gasoline was considerably cheaper, often 20cts/gal under reformulated grades.

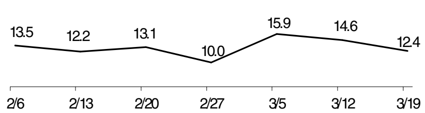
This suggests that East Coast markets may see a similar surge in RBOB when they make the switch in the next three weeks.

Meanwhile, California was quiet a month or so after its transition. The difficult-to-make spot CARBOB was assessed around $3.25/gal.

Marketers got a break on diesel values. Thanks to one of the most sluggish demand reports in the last five years, ULSD prices eased back to around $3.05-$3.20/gal in the Midwest and $3.25-$3.30/gal on the coasts.

National Rack-to-Retail Margins

(Averages in cts/gal)

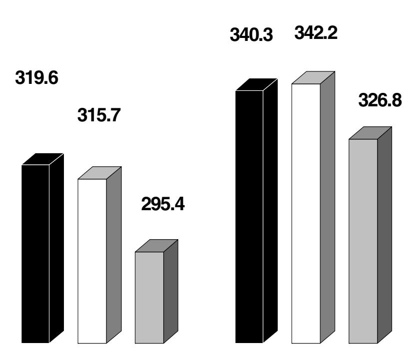


Source: OPIS Retail Fuel Watch
For more information call 1-888-301-2645.

Average U.S. Contract Price

(in cts/gal)

Unleaded Gasoline ULS No. 2



Source: Oil Price Information Service

Current Week Previous Week Year Ago

Majors pump up purchases with TV

Several major oil companies are offering television programming at pump islands in a bid to lure fuel customers into the store to make other purchases.

Industry research shows about two-thirds of customers who fuel up at gas stations never set foot inside the store. But majors are finding that five-minute programs of sports, headline news and weather with commercials that hawk in-store products can successfully cross-sell store merchandise to customers who would normally just buy gasoline.

Gas Station TV (GSTV), of Birmingham, Mich., working with Wayne, a dispenser manufacturer, has relationships with SuperAmerica, Chevron, Sunoco, ConocoPhillips, ExxonMobil, Murphy, Shell, BP, Arco and Gulf to offer pump TV at no cost to their retailers.

The system is supported by advertising revenue.

Gas Station TV said it has more than 1,400 installations around the country. GSTV has deals with Turner Broadcasting System Inc. and Bloomberg Television to provide custom programs.

Arco Petroleum Co. is only the latest major to add TV installations,

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How gas giveaway gets more mileage

Customers lined up for several blocks outside the Oakton Street Shell station in Evanston, Ill., all for the chance to get up to 15 gallons of free gasoline on March 21. It was part of a four-city freebie promoting Shell's new nitrogen-enriched gasolines, unveiled earlier this month.

Shell selected one station in each of four cities – Chicago, Miami, Los Angeles and Houston – and teamed up with a local radio station to promote surprise, 90-minute gas giveaways. The goal was to let consumers know Shell reformulated its fuel and to give them a chance to try it.

"We have hosted gasoline giveaways before," Gerardo Amado, Shell's North America fuels marketing manager, told Oil Express. "We continue to see strong media coverage of these events."

Amado declined comment on how much Shell spent and the traffic the giveaways generated. But Greg Ehrlich, president of Convevo Partners, a Columbus, Ohio, consulting firm, says he did a similar giveaway when he was with distributor Certified Oil, of Columbus. "Gas giveaways generate a lot of local media buzz," Ehrlich says. "They can also have the unintended benefit of blocking your competitor's driveway for a while."

How to get the best bang for the buck:

- Team up with a popular radio station. People often listen in as they drive and will be in position to take advantage of the giveaway. Shell ran a series of local radio promotions in each market leading up to the event. One of the stations Shell chose bills itself as a "listen-at-work"

(see more gas mileage continued on page 2)

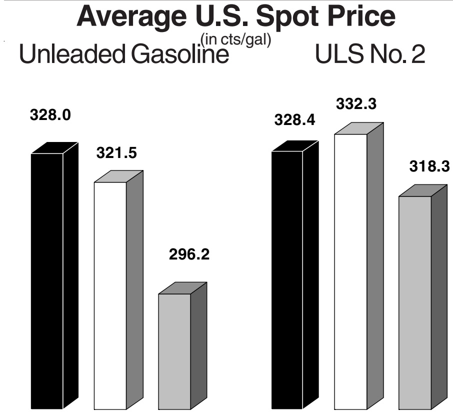
Gasoline Supply Barometer

EIA data suggest that the country is still in the throes of demand destruction. Overall petroleum demand of 17.674 million b/d reflects a drop of 897,000 b/d for the week, and is off 1.636 million b/d from the same week last year. Gasoline demand is debatable, but numbers are down by enough so that the loss of three refineries is counterbalanced.

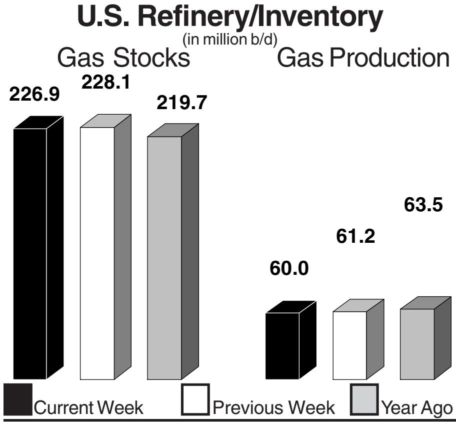
Some supply loosened up offshore. Trading companies found 133,000 b/d of additional foreign RBOB last week, and that was supplemented by 128,000 b/d of offshore GTAB, which often gets turned into reformulated gas. Gasoline cracks that are $15/bbl above North Atlantic sweet crude suggest that foreign refiners may continue to target destinations near New York and Boston Harbors.

Gasoline stocks fell by 1.2 million bbl overall, and that included a 1.6-million-bbl decline on the East Coast. But RBOB inventories held steady, and the overall stock drop is consistent with the typical purge of winter blends of gas.

Average U.S. Spot Price



U.S. Refinery/Inventory



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which will be available in 138 Arco stations immediately and will be offered to other eligible stations in Arco's 1,400 retailer network.

Arco has had GSTV at locations in Los Angeles and San Francisco since 2007. As the relationship grows, it will add locations in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Phoenix, Sacramento, San Diego and Las Vegas.

GSTV claims it has seen some c-stores boost advertised product sales as much as 78% through pump TV commercials. Nielson research also found that 85% of customers said they'd want to watch GSTV again and 80% think GSTV is a good source of product information.

A similar pump TV program is available through pump manufacturer Gilbarco Veeder-Root and digital media partner Outcast media.

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(...more gas mileage continued from page 1)

station and regularly rewards listeners with freebies if they tune in during office hours.

- Schedule the giveaway for when many people are on the road. Shell's 90-minute giveaways were from 7-8:30 a.m. during the workweek.
- Limit the location. Shell picked just one station per metro area. You cut your expenses but still generate the excitement of a sweepstakes.
- Keep the site a secret. If people know too much in advance, you'll have chaos and a potential traffic hazard. Shell had the radio stations and other local media announce the location one hour before the event.
- Appoint a coordinator. Shell had its own site coordinator at each station working with local police to design a traffic plan for the event. The site coordinator also ensures there is sufficient gasoline supply to accommodate the event and immediately afterward.
- Corral new business. Ehrlich says Certified was prepared on site with membership forms so that it could sign up people for its loyalty program during its gas giveaway. It captured new customers' cell-phone numbers and e-mail addresses so that it could text them about future promotions.
- Boost repeat business. To get these new customers to return, Certified also gave customers loyalty cards on the spot. The cards were preloaded with an unspecified amount of award points that could be used toward future discounts. To know just how many credits were on the card, the customers had to come back to the station to test it, Ehrlich says.

"You have to integrate the giveaway with your brand marketing program," he says. "You have to maximize your exposure."

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Ethanol blends overtake gasoline supply chain

It's been a long time coming, but ethanol now dominates the U.S. gasoline landscape. The number of wholesale terminals supplying only conventional clear gasoline for truck loadings has trimmed down to just nine out of about 325 rack locations in the United States, according to the latest OPIS and AXXIS rack information.

That means less than 3% of the nation's midstream supply chain is ethanol-free at the racks, providing only the legacy clear unleaded to customers.

A look back at the number of wholesale racks with conventional fuel shows the trend towards ethanol blending has only accelerated in the last couple of years.

In 2009, there were still 94 terminals across the U.S. which sold only conventional fuel and no ethanol – less than 30% of the total racks. That three-year-old U.S. statistic showcased an even lower percentage than what Canadian racks currently see.

In 2010, that number dwindled to less than 70 U.S. wholesale locations without ethanol, and by 2011 the number was down to 35, or less than 11% – still sharply higher than today's 2.5%-3%.

Now, nearly a quarter of the way through 2012, the push towards gasoline blends containing up to 15% ethanol is furthering the cause while creating a wider gulf between what some policy makers want and what a growing chorus of consumers want, not to mention the opinion of automakers.

Push for independence

The push from former President George W. Bush's administration for fuel independence and ethanol blending requirements gave the United States the impetus to organize infrastructure for mass production, storage, blending and shipping of ethanol for use in gasoline. Fast forward seven years from the original U.S. renewable fuels standard (RFS) requirement and one is hard-pressed to find a wholesale fuel location that houses only conventional fuel and no ethanol.

Jobbers loading gasoline can lift only conventional clear fuel at the following racks: West Memphis, Ark.; Winslow, Ariz.; Rome, Ga.; Helena, Mont.; Wynnewood, Okla.; Mt. Pleasant, Texas; Moses Lake, Wash.; Newcastle, Wyo.

To skew the statistics even further in favor of gasoline blending, certain racks contain pure ethanol storage tanks either on site for immediate blending or within a short distance of the terminal: Rock Rapids, Iowa; Wichita Falls, Texas; and Rock Springs and Sheridan, Wyo.

Some gasoline blenders also have the option to add pure ethanol to their partially full truck tanks at transload facilities peppered throughout the country.

Alaska is exempt from the RFS mandate, so Anchorage and Fairbanks terminals house only conventional clear fuel. Hawaii is also excluded from the RFS but follows its own blending mandate.

Difficult for consumers

Ethanol-free gasoline has become increasingly difficult for U.S. consumers to find in all markets in the lower 48 states – RFG-mandated and non-mandated areas alike. U.S. government mandates for ethanol blending plus economic advantages enjoyed by gasoline suppliers have paved the way for an all-out takeover by ethanol blends in the supply chain.

While it is still vastly available at terminals alongside blended finished fuel, end-users on the retail level are struggling in some regions to purchase conventional clear unleaded.

It has been a development closely tracked in the fuel industry but largely lost on consumers.

Most end-users have paid little or no attention to policy changes initiated in the gasoline supply chain over the last several years. Most drivers have not noticed a palpable impact from the addition of ethanol into gasoline, instead fixated on the historic price levels for oil and finished fuel.

Many consumers, however, have been forced to seek supplies of conventional clear gasoline for their recreational watercraft, lawn equipment, all-terrain vehicles, snowmobiles and generators. Some also have sought conventional gasoline for their cars after noticing the lower fuel economy that ethanol-blended product causes.

In certain markets, it's become popular for retail gasoline operations to advertise sales of gasoline without ethanol. "Most convenience stores in Oklahoma advertise with very large signs and banners that state 'no ethanol' if that is what they offer," said Candace McGinnis, spokesperson for the Oklahoma Petroleum Marketers Association.

Other consumers in areas mandated to use reformulated gasoline (RFG) with no tenable access to non-blended fuel have had to wing it. States with heavy marina usage have seen the worst of it. Many websites have been devoted to helping watercraft users.

Florida, the state with the largest coastline other than Alaska, has been working on a bill to end the mandate in the state that requires all finished gasoline to contain 9%-10% ethanol. If passed, the bill will take effect in just a few months.

With recreational boating widespread, ethanol-free fuel is more readily available. Many motorists have shunned fuel containing ethanol even for automotive on-road use.

Once the law is signed, as expected, the state Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services will post a list online of retailers with non-blended fuel for sale.

Ethanol attracts water, which can ruin combustible engines. When water enters a fuel tank, the ethanol within the blended gasoline absorbs water and can cause ethanol to separate from the rest of the blend.

For example, consumers are told to leave small-engine fuel tanks as full as possible while in storage when RFG is the only option. The same goes for gas cans, which should also be elevated from the ground when stored outdoors, in garages or in sheds. Engines with exposed fuel filters are especially vulnerable.

Consumers can find a privately run, user-maintained list of gas stations selling conventional clear gasoline at http://pure-gas.org.

Taking sides

The two biggest proponents for ethanol in fuel have been the U.S. government and gasoline blenders. The sheer blending economics are often very attractive to gasoline suppliers.

Even after the federal Volumetric Ethanol Excise Tax Credit (VEETC) expired on Dec.31, blenders have been able to save considerable amounts of money versus conventional gasoline suppliers – some as much as 15cts/gal. For about two years, ethanol blending economics have been generally positive. In fact, 2012 has seen some of the best blending profits in that time – even without the tax credit.

These key overarching factors both support blending, even with a fair amount of pushback from other industries, which means the momentum is all on the side of ethanol and its growing infrastructure.

"With the specter of the ethanol blend wall looming and demand destruction becoming a household term, the unrealistic mandates are driving them all to terminal blending," said Mark Larson of the Colorado/Wyoming Petroleum Marketers Association.

Few jobbers, blenders and others in the petroleum industry have objected to ethanol's rise. It's more the growing refrain of livestock farmers, grocer associations, boating groups and niche environmental groups with eyes on corn prices that have echoed their criticism and objection of ethanol in fuel. Still, the juggernaut fuel additive continues to seep further into the downstream nooks of the fuel supply chain.

Methyl tertiary-butyl ether (MTBE) was once the lone gasoline additive competing with ethanol in the U.S. marketplace. But MTBE was denounced after it leaked from ground tanks and tainted drinking water. The high-grade octane enhancer is now only domestically produced by a couple of refiners strictly for export purposes.

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FDA levies tobacco fines

The federal Food and Drug Administration is now fining tobacco retailers around the country after a second round of compliance checks focusing on sales to minors.

Sixty-two retailers were assessed penalties from Sept. 29, 2011, through Feb. 29, 2012, and 28 of them were gas stations, c-stores or truckstops. Of those, 11 were fined $250 for selling tobacco to a minor; three were fined $500 for having self-serve displays and failing to remove them; and 14 were fined $500 for selling to a minor and failing to verify the purchaser was at least 27 years old.

Penalties escalate with repeat violations to $2,000 for four violations over two years, $5,000 for five violations over three years, and $10,000 for six violations over four years. FDA can revoke the right to sell tobacco for flagrant violations. The agency has said it will be more lenient if retailers have a federally approved training program. Though FDA has provided retailers with guidance on training, it has yet to officially approve a formal program.

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Enterprise: Back for more rate hikes

As expected, Enterprise TE Products has resubmitted a proposal for new tariffs that in some cases would double costs for transporting refined products and liquefied petroleum gases along the TEPPCO pipeline. The company cited continued losses and a changing market.

Hundreds of jobbers could see rate spikes as a result.

When Enterprise first submitted the proposed tariffs in mid-February, a group of about 60 shippers, including BP Products, ConocoPhillips, Murphy Oil and CHS Inc., asked the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to reject or suspend the increases.

The shippers said TEPPCO failed in that original filing to detail its losses on transporting petroleum products, to make a case for changing to "zone" tariffs rather than individual tariffs, and to state why it should be allowed to have lower tariffs for certain destinations.

The FERC rejected the proposal in early March, saying the paperwork was deficient.

The resubmitted tariff leaves shipping rates essentially unchanged, but attempts to make a better case for the increases. If approved, the new tariffs would be in effect by April 16.

In the new filing, Enterprise estimates its cost of service for the TEPPCO to be approximately $349 million during this year. But the pipeline will only bring in about $267 million in revenue under its current tariff rates.

Enterprise also said that changing shipment patterns are behind its decision to divide tariffs into "Southern" and "Northern" segments.

Growing production of gas liquids from the Marcellus Shale region means more propane and butane is being shipped to points north from Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Ohio rather than from the Gulf Coast. Enterprise says the loss of longer-haul volumes to shorter-haul volumes is one reason it's losing money and dividing the pipeline into Northern and Southern segments better lines up revenue with costs.

Likewise, Enterprise says the use of zone shipping rates, rather than listing shipping rates to individual terminals, ensures that shippers are paying the same rate for shipping product to the same geographic destination.

Enterprise also addresses why it is charging a lower rate for shipping refined products from the Gulf Coast to Cape Girardeau, Mo., than it does for a shorter distance to North Little Rock, Ark.

Murphy Oil and HWRT Oil Company, which owns a terminal in North Little Rock, said issuing a lower tariff to this destination unfairly benefitted Enterprise since it owns a terminal in Cape Girardeau.

Enterprise said it needs to charge a lower rate for shipping gasoline to Cape Girardeau because of the many competitors in the region. That includes TransMontaigne Partners, which owns barge terminals in Cape Girardeau and Paducah, Ky., and Marathon Petroleum, which has barge terminal in Paducah and Mount Vernon, Ind.

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Canadian gasoline retailers fined $2M for price-fixing

Three competing retailers pleaded guilty to fixing the price of gasoline in Kingston and Brockville, Ontario, from May to November in 2007, Ontario's Competition Bureau said.

The Ontario Superior Court fined Pioneer Energy LP, Canadian Tire Corp. and Mr. Gas a total of more than $2 million for violating the Competition Act. Each of the companies is subject to a court order for 10 years and must educate their employees about the antitrust law.

Pioneer Energy was fined $985,000 for price-fixing in Kingston and Brockville; Canadian Tire was fined $900,000 for price-fixing in Kingston and Brockville; and Mr. Gas was fined $150,000 for price-fixing in Brockville.

The Bureau said price-fixing conspiracies are difficult to prove. High or identical prices are not enough to establish collusion. There must be evidence competitors made an illegal deal to set prices, the Bureau said.

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Getty Realty posts net loss

The escalating costs of Getty Realty's ongoing legal tussle with its largest tenant, Getty Petroleum Marketing (Marketing), over sites, leases and payments are eating into Getty Realty's profits. Getty Realty's results for the quarter and year ended Dec. 31, 2011, were hit hard by Marketing's filing for Chapter 11 protection under the Federal Bankruptcy Code.

Getty Realty filed financial adjustments of about $84 million that include $8.7 million non-cash allowance for deferred rental revenue related to the Master Lease (in addition to the $11 million allowance recorded during the quarter ended Sept. 30, 2011) fully reserving for the deferred rent receivable relating to the Master Lease.

There was also an $8.8 million provision for bad debts, primarily attributable to nonpayment of pre-petition rent and real estate taxes due from Marketing and $1.5 million of legal and other professional fees related to the Marketing Bankruptcy. Getty Realty also reported $47.9 million accrued liability representing the assumption of aggregate Marketing environmental liabilities as well as $17.1 million impairment charges related to the Marketing portfolio.

Getty Realty reported a net loss for the quarter ended Dec. 31, 2011 of $19.5 million, or $0.58 per share, which decreased by $32.0 million as compared to earnings of $12.5 million for the quarter ended Dec. 31, 2010. Net earnings for the year ended Dec. 31, 2011, decreased by $39.2 million to $12.5 million, or $0.37 per share, as compared to $51.7 million for the year ended Dec. 31, 2010.

As of Dec. 31, 2011, Marketing was in possession of 797 properties pursuant to the Master Lease representing approximately 69% of Getty Realty's 1,149 owned and leased properties.

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Pilot Flying J upgrades loyalty program

Pilot Flying J is launching a new version of its customer loyalty program targeting every motorist. It used to offer loyalty rewards only to RV customers and professional drivers.

The "MyRewards" loyalty program will offer in-store and restaurant discounts as well as discounts on fuel and other perks. Fuel customers registered for a MyRewards card will be eligible for discounts at Pilot Flying J-owned and operated partner restaurants, and the card will offer buy-some-get-one-free discounts on products such as coffee and fountain drinks.

The company is using its first sweepstakes and country music star Trace Adkins to promote the new program. Loyalty card swipes through the end of April will enter members into a single drawing to win $10,000 cash. Customers pick up loyalty cards at Pilot and Flying J locations and register online. They can check their account balances on register receipts, in-store at MyRewards kiosks or on the Pilot Flying J website.

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E15 approval getting close

The Renewable Fuels Association (RFA) expects EPA to soon give formal approval to some companies that have applied to offer E15 blends at gasoline stations, RFA President Bob Dinneen said.

The EPA confirmed it is reviewing 18 E15 registration submissions. The agency has estimated two to four weeks to process a registration request.

RFA notes that EPA has had some of those applications for about four weeks already. That's why Dinneen believes the approval is imminent.

In 2011, EPA finalized its waivers allowing for 2001 and newer vehicles to run on higher blends of ethanol up to E15, and also released a new label that must appear on gasoline pumps that dispense the fuel blend. However, until E15 has been registered with EPA, it cannot legally be sold.

EPA just approved the model Misfueling Mitigation Plan submitted by RFA, another step to bring the fuel to market. In February, EPA approved health effects testing submitted by RFA and Growth Energy, clearing the way for companies to register with EPA to offer E15.

Meanwhile, RFA has published an "E15 Retailer Handbook," for marketers interested in retailing the fuel once it's approved. The association sent it to more than 13,000 retailers, mainly to states in the Farm Belt.

It is also asking EPA to give E15 a waiver from the summertime RVP standard. Currently, only gasoline-ethanol blends of 9%-10% ethanol are allowed to exceed the RVP standard by 1 psi.

"The job now is largely the industry's to make E15 a commercial reality," Dinneen said.

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Banks, CUs oppose debit lawsuit

A broad coalition of banks and credit unions is weighing in on the lawsuit pitting convenience stores and other retailers against the Federal Reserve and its rule capping interchange fees on debit card transactions.

The National Association of Convenience Stores and other retailers sued the Fed last year, saying its attempt to reduce debit card fees doesn't go far enough. The case is in the U.S. District Court of the District of Columbia.

Financial institutions have filed a friend-of-the-court brief saying they oppose both the retailers and the Fed's rule. The rule "grants merchants a multibillion-dollar windfall, capping fees well below the market-based rates," the lenders said in court records.

If the court sides with the merchants, the Fed will reduce fees so much that the retailers will be getting electronic debit payment services "practically for free," the banking community said.

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Station owner cited for tank violations

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has issued $2,979 in penalties to Nader Elias Fakhoury, of Corvallis, for violating state regulations for underground storage tanks at a gas station he owns in Philomath.

DEQ discovered during an April 2011 inspection that Fakhoury failed to provide required operator training and to record the status of release detection equipment designed to provide an early warning if the tank systems fail and begin leaking.

State regulations require inspection of these systems on a monthly basis. And during DEQ inspections, the tank owner or operator must present at least 12 months of monitoring records.

Fakhoury was unable to provide records.

As a result, he was charged $485 for failing to provide training to operators of the tank system and $1,100 for failing to keep the required release detection records. He was also penalized $1,394 because since 2008, he failed to conduct annual line leak detector testing and line tightness testing and didn't provide test results to DEQ.

Fakhoury appealed the penalties on Jan. 25. He also completed line leak detector and line tightness testing and provided training to the operators in June 2011 after DEQ notified him of the violations.

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Truckstop chain sees volume dip

TravelCenters of America saw same-store diesel sales ease slightly in fourth quarter 2011, but executives hinted that the 237-site chain sacrificed some volume on fuel islands in order to maintain a healthy margin of about 15cts/gal.

Still, the once beleaguered company managed to make $34.7 million on fuel in what was described as a "banner year" for TA.

Same-site fuel sales dipped 2.6% in the quarter, but CEO Tom O'Brien indicated the slump could be credited to pricing strategies where the firm didn't chase low margin sales. Freight and trucking demand showed slow but continual improvement in the quarter, although management is reluctant to issue a vote of confidence for the strength and sustainability of the ongoing economic recovery.

The company spent $50.2 million last year to acquire and improve eight travel centers, and also spent $105.9 million improving existing sites. Top brass indicated that the company will be interested if other sensible properties come on the market. In fact, earlier this month, TA bought a travel center on Interstate 85 for $5 million.

TA has ramped up its DEF effort, adding diesel exhaust fluid dispensers at 42 sites, with plans to have DEF at every location before 2012 ends.

Management is also closely monitoring the movement toward natural gas as a choice for some fleet operators. O'Brien said it seems "compelling," but fleets have made few actual commitments to natural gas. He assured analysts that if natural gas gets traction, TA "won't fall behind competition."

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State revokes license for drug sales

Under a new law in Indiana, retailers who are caught offering synthetic drugs for sale can have their business licenses revoked for a year.

The provision is part of the tougher ban Indiana passed on synthetic drugs, which have been sold at some convenience stores and gas stations. Synthetic drugs mimic the effects of illegal substances such as marijuana and cocaine and are commonly called "bath salts" or "spice."

Many states have passed similar bans but producers of the drugs kept changing the ingredients to get around the law. That's why some states have broadened restrictions recently.

Indiana's new ban gives the state's board of pharmacy the authority to adopt an emergency rule to declare that a substance is a synthetic drug. And retail employees who sell the drugs can be charged with a felony.

The bill was signed into law earlier this month and took effect immediately.

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N.C. considers ethanol labels

North Carolina may require ethanol and other oxygenated gasoline blends to be labeled at the pump. The North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services said the goal is to allow consumers to make informed purchases.

"More than 90% of the gas stations we inspect carry some form of ethanol-blended gasoline but until now stations have not been required to label their pumps," said Steve Troxler, the North Carolina agriculture commissioner.

For blends of 10% or less ethanol, the label must say "contains up to 10% ethanol," for blends of 10%-15% ethanol, labels must say "contains up to 15% ethanol," for blends with 15%-85% ethanol, the label must state the exact percentage of ethanol.

The new labeling rules now go to the North Carolina Rules Review Commission for final consideration. The agriculture department said if approved, the rules could take effect May 1.

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C-store chains go mobile

iSIGN Media Solutions, a global provider of mobile device-based advertising programs, has partnered with Couche-Tard and Mac's convenience stores to present mobile advertisements to patrons browsing with Bluetooth-enabled mobile devices.

The program is driven by iSIGN's Interactive Marketing Solution (IMS) 3.1 software and interacts with the mobile devices after discovering them on the Bluetooth wireless network.

The software will send interactive advertising messages pertaining to current Mac's and Couche-Tard promotions and products and will connect with a minimum of 1.5 million mobile devices per day, iSIGN says.

The program will also gather audience shopper metrics and collect data that will be used to evaluate customer behavior and optimize future ad delivery.

The technology will eventually be able to engage with customers over Wi-Fi networks, the company said, pending further improvements to infrastructure.

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