

# Fact Sheet

## Gas Pump Accuracy and Fuel Quality

### Who regulates gas stations?

The Kansas Department of Agriculture's weights and measures program regulates gas pump accuracy and fuel quality. At least once every 18 months, we test roughly 26,000 gas pumps to ensure the consumer is getting all the fuel for which he or she has paid. In 2006 and 2007, the compliance rate for gas pump accuracy was 96 percent.

Inspectors also randomly collect fuel samples to send to a private laboratory for analysis. This testing is to confirm the octane rating of the fuel matches the octane label at the pump and to verify there are no impurities in the fuel. In 2007, the compliance rate on fuel quality was 94 percent, down slightly from 97 percent in previous years.

### What are some warning signs that a pump might not be accurate?

Your automobile owner's manual will list approximately how many gallons of fuel your vehicle holds, but you can't use it as an accurate measure of fuel. Weights and measures inspectors use special equipment to verify whether a pump accurately dispenses fuel. However, there are some warning signs you can look for at the pump that could indicate a pump might not be accurate or that you are being cheated:

- The pump's hose is leaking fuel.
- The meter does not start at zero or does not reset to zero.
- The total gallons multiplied by price per gallon does not equal the total cost of the sale.
- The display cannot be read because of burned out bulbs, broken glass, or some other reason.

- The pump has a sign that states "total sale is doubled," or the computer won't compute at the actual price per gallon.
- The pump does not have a state approval sticker, or the last test date is more than 18 months ago. The state approval is a yellow sticker that identifies the regulating authority as the Kansas Department of Agriculture's weights and measures program. It also lists the month, day and year of the last inspection.
- There are errors on the receipt, whether it's the number of gallons dispensed, price per gallon, or total purchase price.
- Bad gas can cause a host of problems, ranging from reduced fuel efficiency to an engine that won't run. If you have problems you think are due to bad fuel, first check with your mechanic to identify a cause. He or she will be able to tell you whether the problem is related to the fuel. If it is, report it to us immediately.

### How do I make a complaint?

If you think you have received less fuel than you paid for, or you think there is a quality problem with fuel you have purchased, report it immediately to:

Kansas Department of Agriculture  
Weights and Measures  
1320 Research Park Dr.  
Manhattan, KS 66502  
(785) 564-6681

When you report your concern, provide as much detail as possible. Include:

- When and where the purchase was made, including date, time, street address and city.

- The pump number, which is on a yellow sticker that reads “Kansas Weights and Measures Identification Number.” Each pump is assigned its own number.
- A clear explanation of the concern, whether it has to do with fuel quality or the quantity of fuel received.

### **What happens after I file a complaint?**

The weights and measures program will fill out a complaint form using information you provide. After that, the complaint is assigned to an inspector who will investigate it.

If the inspector determines there is a problem with a pump’s fuel dispensing accuracy, the device can be taken out of service until repairs are made. When the repairs are complete, a follow-up inspection verifies that it is dispensing accurately.

When no discrepancies are observed, the complaint is closed without further action.

If an inspector uncovers evidence that suggests that dispensing inaccuracy is an intentional deception of consumers, the case is forwarded to the Kansas Attorney General for prosecution.

Once an investigation is complete, the results are communicated to the person who made the complaint either by telephone, mail or email.

### **If I suspect price gouging, what can I do?**

Price gouging is generally defined as a dramatic increase in prices for goods or services in short supply following an emergency situation or disaster.

Kansas law prohibits “unjustifiably increasing during a time of disaster the price at which any necessary property or service is offered for sale to consumers.” Regular increases in the price of gas that are similar to other stations in the area do not qualify as price gouging.

If you believe you have witnessed, or that you experienced, price gouging in Kansas, notify the Kansas Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Division at (785) 296-3751, or 1 (800) 432-2310, or fill out a consumer complaint online at [www.ksag.org](http://www.ksag.org).

### **Gas prices are high. What can I do?**

Vehicle operation and general vehicle maintenance affect fuel efficiency and can be controlled by the driver. To help you make the most of your fuel dollar:

- Check your speed. The faster you drive the more gas you burn. Use your cruise control when you can to maintain a steady speed.
- Starting and stopping. Don't race your engine or accelerate rapidly when starting from a stop. Wait a few seconds before moving after the light turns green, and then slowly remove your foot from the brake pedal. When the car moves on its own, slowly increase your speed.
- Plan ahead. Plan your trips so that you don't drive unnecessarily. Another option is to carpool with a friend if you are heading to the same destination, or take public transportation.
- Vehicle maintenance. Keep your vehicle in peak condition by adhering to a regular maintenance schedule.
- Gas and oil. Use the grade of gasoline and oil recommended for your vehicle, and don't “top off” when fueling your vehicle.
- Lighten up. Remove unnecessary items from your vehicle to make it lighter. Lighter vehicles burn less fuel.
- Check your tire pressure. Keeping your tires properly inflated can improve fuel efficiency by as much as 3.3 percent. Also, properly inflated tires are safer and they last longer.