

NJ bans sales of 8 motor oil brands

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December 5, 2014



(Photo: Asbury Park Press photo/DAVID P. WILLIS)

WOODBIDGE – New Jersey has banned the sale of eight brands of discount motor oils after testing found that what’s listed on the label isn’t what’s actually in the bottle.

The ban, ordered by the [New Jersey Office of Weights and Measures](#), covers motor oil with the brand names Auto Club Motor Oil, Black Knight Motor Oil, Lube State Motor Oil, MaxiGuard MG, Orbit Motor Oil, TruStar Motor Oil, U.S. Economy Motor Oil and U.S. Spirit Motor Oil.

“As of today, these products may no longer be sold in New Jersey,” said Steve C. Lee, acting director of the state Division of Consumer Affairs. The motor oil is priced at \$3 to \$6 a quart.

Operating off a tip from the [Petroleum Quality Institute of America](#), the state sent various motor oils, found for sale at 99-cent stores, discounters and gasoline stations, to a state-contracted lab for testing. The results: The now-banned products failed to conform to the viscosity stated on the product label.

Viscosity is a measure of a liquid's tendency to flow. High-viscosity fluids are considered thick and flow slowly, while low-viscosity fluids are considered thin and flow faster.

Among the banned products, motor oils labeled 10W-40 had viscosity measures that were "widely and unacceptably" in contrast to the industry standards of 10W-40 motor oil, the state said.

A car owner that uses motor oil with viscosity levels that are either too high or too low for a vehicle's specifications runs the risk of engine failure, premature engine wear over time and decreased fuel efficiency, Lee said.

"These products bear misleading labels that provide consumers with no way to know whether they are appropriate for specific vehicles," he said.

Investigators from county and state offices of weights and measures are fanning out across the state to inform retailers of the ban, requiring them to pull the "deceptively labeled" products from their shelves, Lee said.

Retailers might not have known they were selling mislabeled products, the state said. But now, with the ban, retailers who continue to sell them will be subject to a civil fine of at least \$100 per container.

Lee said the investigation continues and will move to the manufacturers of the products, too.

"What is especially troubling is that many of these now banned products are sold at cheaper prices and tend to attract consumers who may be looking to save money, or many who don't have a lot of money to spare, who want to make sure they are taking care of their vehicles," Lee said. "It makes no sense for these consumers who are trying to save a few dollars to then face the possibility of extra maintenance costs, the costs of possible early engine failure or extra trips to the gas station."

Sal Risalvato, director of the [New Jersey Gasoline, Convenience, Automotive Association](#), a trade group of service station owners, said his organization supported the state's action.

"Our members know that, as an organization, we have a zero-tolerance policy regarding intentional wrongdoing and fraud," Risalvato said. "Our members support this strict policy because the success of their business lies in the goodwill and trust of their customers."