

## Could gas prices in Central Jersey go even lower?

Everett Merrill,  
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*An attendant waits on customers waiting in long lines at the Costco gas station in North Plainfield. The lines are due to regular gas being priced at \$1.69 per gallon. (Photo: Kathy Johnson/Staff Photographer)*

### Story Highlights

- The average price for a gallon of regular gas in New Jersey is \$2.16.
- The lowest price in Central Jersey is \$1.69 at Costco.
- The national average price of gas may drop another 10 cents per gallon during the next week.

The temperatures aren't the only thing dropping in New Jersey.

The average price of gasoline in the Garden State continues to plummet, with a gallon of regular gas costing an average of \$2.16, according to GasBuddy's daily survey of 3,525 gas outlets in the state. This compares with the national average that has fallen 5.4 cents per gallon for regular gas in the last week, according to GasBuddy's web site.

A year ago the average price was \$3.33.

Experts predict more good news may be on the way for motorists as we get deeper into 2015.

"U.S. drivers ended 2014 on a high-note with gas prices plummeting over the last few months of the year," said Tracy Noble, spokesperson for AAA Mid-Atlantic. "The lower gas price trend is likely to continue into 2015, with the year promising to provide much bigger savings to consumers as long as crude oil remains relatively cheap.

"It would not be surprising for U.S. consumers to save \$50-\$75 billion on gasoline in 2015 if prices remain low."

The lowest average price for gas in the country is in Missouri (\$1.764). The highest state is Hawaii (\$3.419).

The reason for the low prices at the pumps is because the price of crude oil continues to drop due to excess supply in North America compared to the amount of OPEC oil. Crude oil has fallen below \$50 per barrel for the first time since April 2009.

The national average price of gas may drop another 10 cents per gallon during the next week or so as retail prices catch up with the steep declines in the cost of crude oil, AAA Mid-Atlantic said.

Barring any significant fluctuations in the price of crude oil, the average price at the pump is likely to remain below \$3 per gallon in the U.S. for 2015, although prices may see seasonal increases this spring as refineries undergo maintenance, or this summer as demand increases during the busy summer driving season.



*Drivers in cars snake through the adjacent parking lot as they wait in line at the Costco gas station in North Plainfield. The lines are due to regular gas being priced at \$1.69 per gallon.(Photo: Kathy Johnson)*

In New Jersey that will mean even higher savings, but Sal Risalvato, the executive director of The New Jersey Gasoline, C-Store, Automotive Association (NJGCA) has a warning for New Jersey's drivers.

"Enjoy these prices now," he said. "It's impossible for them to stay this low forever. Don't change your driving habits.

"Motorists get very comfortable with the low prices and change their driving habits. They add more miles and start driving cars that consume more gasoline."

### **Gas lines at Costco**

They also are willing to wait in long lines to save as much as 40 to 50 cents a gallon. At the Costco gas stations in North Plainfield, North Brunswick and Edison, where the cost of a gallon of regular was the lowest in the state on Monday at \$1.69, drivers were patient.

"The longest I've waited is 20 minutes," said Miriam Hartman of Warren as she pulled up to one of the pumps at the North Plainfield Costco. "But it's worth it for the price."

"When I see the lines are really long I don't stop. I come by later at night or early in the morning. I know the price will get higher, but now it's worth it."

Over the past few weeks it's been difficult to differentiate the parking lot for the store and the lines for gas at the North Plainfield Costco.

"When prices get this low it's going to create a chaotic situation at times," said Mike Freeman, Costco's warehouse manager in North Plainfield. "But we try and put some control on it. With the rise in business it has created job opportunities that may have not been there previously."

Freeman said he's added five employees to direct the traffic flow near the pumps.

"None of us can forecast when the prices will go up," Freeman said, "but right now it's booming."

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### **Fuel savings tips**

**Avoid High Speeds:** As your speed increases, your aerodynamic drag increases in an exponential fashion. Driving 62 mph (100 km/h) vs 75 mph (120 km/h) will reduce fuel consumption by about 15%.

**Do Not Accelerate or Brake Hard:** By anticipating the traffic and applying slow steady acceleration and braking, fuel economy may increase by as much as 20%.

**Keep Tires Properly Inflated:** Keep tire air pressure at the level recommended by your vehicle manufacturer. A single tire under inflated by 2 PSI, increases fuel consumption by 1%.

**Keep Windows Closed:** Windows open, especially at highway speeds, increase drag and result in decreased fuel economy of up to 10%.

**Service Vehicle Regularly:** Proper maintenance avoids poor fuel economy related to dirty air filters, old spark plugs or low fluid levels.

**Use Cruise Control:** Maintaining a constant speed over long distances often saves gas.

**Avoid Long Idles:** If you anticipate being stopped for more than 1 minute, shut off the car. Restarting the car uses less fuel than letting it idle for this time.