



New Jersey Gasoline, C-Store, Automotive Association (NJGCA)

(Formerly New Jersey Gasoline Retailers Association)

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Among stations cited by Weights and Measures, none were NJGCA Members

The Office of Weights and Measures correctly handed out citations to stations owners; NJGCA Members were uncited and better educated than less-professional fuel retailers.

Sal Risalvato, Executive Director of the New Jersey Gasoline, Convenience, Automotive Association (NJGCA), made the following remarks regarding recent violations handed out by the Office of Weights and Measures (OWM) against gasoline station owners:

“Recently, the Division of Consumer Affairs’ Office of Weights and Measures sent out two press release explaining citing service stations charged with infractions for allegedly violating the State’s motor fuel law. One group of owners, who raised their street price multiple times in a 24 hour period immediately after Hurricane Irene, have now been fined by OWM. Another owner, who owns multiple locations and has been fined previously, was fined for operating a station without a Motor Fuels Retail Dealer License”, said Risalvato.

“I’d like to thank OWM professionals for their vigilance in watching out for both consumers and other small business owners. I’m proud to say that no NJGCA Members were cited among the violators, underscoring the fact that our members are characteristically more professional and better educated than other non-member, station owners”, Risalvato stated.

“What the public may not realize is that, in circumventing the law, the cited station owners aren’t just harming consumers, but unfairly competing with other small business owners in the industry. Those charged with changing their price multiple times in a 24 hour period amounts to an unfair advantage; either the law should be amended so all

station owners who receive multiple tanker loads a day can change their price more than once in a 24 period or the current law must be enforced so retailers can compete against each other equally. The station owner who operated his location without a valid license is also unfairly competing against stations that have paid for an operators' license and properly maintained their establishments. Kudos to OWM for delivering the message to anyone who would try to play the game by another set of rules", Sal said.

The first press release stated that the Attorney General's Office was conducting investigations for possible price gouging when the three station owners were cited for raising their prices more than once in a 24 hour period. With 74 of 103 post-Irene consumer complaints, now fully investigated, none have been found guilty of gouging.

The second press release stated that the proprietor who operated his station without a valid license, Irfan Hassan of South Orange, has a long history of violations, including comingling regular and premium fuel and selling regular gasoline from premium fuel pumps.

"The fact that only three in 74 complaints were substantiated – and none were found guilty of gouging – speaks well for overwhelming number of the small business owners in our industry. But even among honest business owners, there are a few rotten apples. Sadly, Mr. Hassan is such an apple and deserves the fines and infractions he received. Anyone who tries to betray his customers once is bad enough, but someone who tries to knowingly deceive the public multiple times should be discriminated against and ostracized from the rest of the owners in this business", said Sal.

"Nevertheless, I'm far more pleased that none of these were NJGCA Members. We take pride in educating our Members about existing laws, changes in the industry, and remind them of best-practices in running their establishments. To say that we vigorously encourage them to run the finest, most honest business possible would be an understatement. In fact, before Hurricane Irene ungraciously visited our shores, we sent out a timely communication to our Members to remind them about the special circumstances that surround retail motor vehicle sales during a state of emergency just to avoid any complications", stated Risalvato.

"If you've been in this business as long as I have, you begin to easily distinguish worthy, honest small business owners from those that are less-than-ethical. I've been very fortunate to know far more of the former than the latter, both in my personal life and among NJGCA Members. And that's exactly what we want in our Association: Quality, first-rate small business owners who understand that they live and die by their reputation in the industry and among their patrons", said Risalvato.

"For those reasons, I applaud Attorney General Dow and the professionals at OWM for throwing the book at any cheaters. Even if you don't agree with the rules, you have to follow them. No one should be able to shirk their obligations, gain an unfair advantage, and then use it against the public and other small business owners. And for that, they got what they deserved", concluded Risalvato.

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