

## Consumer Affairs Agencies

*Division of Banks*

*Division of Insurance*

*Division of Professional Licensure*

*Department of  
Telecommunications and Cable*

*Division of Standards*

*State Racing Commission*

Massachusetts Office of Consumer Affairs & Business Regulation

# CONSUMER ADVISORY

## Pay Attention at the Pump: Gas Stations are Making Changes

### Cash or Credit?

The rising price of gas has left independent gas stations struggling to pay credit card transaction fees. As a result, many stations are offering discounts to customers who pay with cash. The practice of charging two prices—one for cash and one for credit—is known as “dual pricing.”

State law prohibits businesses from adding a surcharge to transactions when consumers pay with a credit card. They are, however, allowed to offer discounts to customers who pay with cash.

Motor fuel retailers must post highly visible signs explaining the difference between cash and credit prices at street level and at the pump.

Consumers who pay with credit cards should consider using those that give a percentage of the purchase back. This, in effect, reduces the cost of the fuel.

### Half Gallon Pricing on Older Gas Pumps

Some older, non-digital fuel pumps—less than one percent—cannot compute prices exceeding \$3.99. With gasoline prices in Massachusetts topping \$4 per gallon for the first time ever, some stations with mechanical pumps must allow half-gallon pricing until upgrades can be made.

To minimize the confusion that this change may cause to consumers, the Division of Standards recently sent written notification to motor fuel dealers about the procedures for half-gallon pricing. Retailers with mechanical computers may set the price at one-half the posted retail price and double it to obtain the actual cost of fuel, provided that they have met the following conditions:

- Replacement price computers have been ordered and a copy of the purchase order has been filed with the Division of Standards or the local weights and measures jurisdiction.
- Adequate, weather-proof signage no smaller than 6 x 10 inches must be affixed to fuel dispensers informing consumers that the full-gallon price will be computed by doubling the price on the pump.
- Street signs must be conspicuously marked to indicate the terms of sale. If the sign refers to “cash only”, then that information must be clearly stated and at least one-half the size of the price that appears on the sign.

The Patrick Administration recently launched an information website at [www.mass.gov/gastips](http://www.mass.gov/gastips) to help consumers learn about ways to increase your car’s gas mileage, find the least expensive gas prices in your community, and explore public transportation and other commuting options.

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