

Petroleum Products Program



California Department of Food and Agriculture
Division of Measurement Standards
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INFORMATION GUIDE

Introduction

The Petroleum Products Program maintains and enforces the minimum performance and drivability standards for most petroleum and automotive products (gasoline, gasoline/oxygenate blends, diesel fuel, motor oil, kerosene, brake fluid, automatic transmission fluid, engine coolant and gear oil) sold in California. Additionally, the Program regulates the advertising and labeling of these products. However, the Program **does not** regulate the cost of these products.

There are approximately 14.5 billion gallons of gasoline and 2.6 billion gallons of diesel fuel sold in California each year. Contaminated gasoline, diesel fuel and brake fluid represent major areas of concern for the Program. The marketplace is consistently monitored to ensure the quality of these products, as well as to assure the integrity of motor oils, gear oils, automatic transmission fluids, and engine coolants. The Program operates two laboratories in the State for the testing and analysis of routine and suspect samples. Products are removed from the marketplace and appropriate enforcement action taken when substandard products are found.

The Program is funded by a Motor Oil Fee of \$0.04 per gallon, which is paid on each gallon of motor oil first produced or imported into California. Motor oil means any product used to lubricate the moving parts of a gasoline or diesel engine. The fees required under Sections 13430 and 13431 of the Business and Professions Code are not imposed on motor oil distributed to locations outside of California.

[Where Can the Laws and Regulations be Found?](#)

The laws relating to petroleum products were first enacted in 1931 and are found in the [California Business and Professions Code, Division 5, Chapters 14 and 15](#). Regulations that further define and implement the laws are found in the [California Code of Regulations, Title 4, Division 9, Chapters 6, 7, and 8](#). Violations of the petroleum laws are classified as misdemeanors and carry fines of up to \$1,000 per violation and/or six months in the county jail.

Information for Consumers

The Petroleum Products Program seeks to provide customer confidence when purchasing petroleum and automotive products by ensuring uniformity, fairness and honest competition in the marketplace. This is done by eliminating false advertising and misrepresentation of prices and product quality.

The Division of Measurement Standards Investigators and Specialists work with County Weights and Measures Officials to enforce California's petroleum and automotive products quality, quantity, advertising and labeling laws within the State. The Program also enforces the posting of signs relating to disabled drivers services and [Air and Water](#) equipment. The quality specifications enforced by the Division of Measurement Standards that are of most interest to the motoring public and consumers are:

- Gasoline – octane number, distillation, water and sediment
- Diesel Fuel – cetane number, distillation, flash point, water and sediment
- Motor Oil – viscosity
- Automatic Transmission Fluid – viscosity
- Engine Coolant (antifreeze) – boiling point and freezing point
- Brake Fluid – boiling point

Service stations are required to post the prices of the motor vehicle fuel that they sell. The signs must be visible to the motorist before entering the station to purchase fuel. Any conditions applicable to the sale of the fuel at the advertised price must also be on the advertising sign (i.e., full service or self service and cash price or credit price).

Violations of the petroleum and automotive product quality, advertising and labeling laws are misdemeanors. Violators may be subject to civil or criminal proceedings. Additionally, a complaint may be filed with the district attorney against them for violations.

The Division of Measurement Standards **does not** regulate the price of gasoline or diesel fuel. Questions about the price of fuel can be directed to the California Energy Commission at their website: www.energy.ca.gov, or to the industry trade associations such as the California Independent Oil Marketers Association at www.cioma.com or the Western States Petroleum Association at www.wspa.org.

General Terms and Definitions

Petroleum Products	
Automotive Spark-ignition Engine Fuel	Any product used for the generation of power in a spark-ignition internal combustion engine (i.e., a gasoline engine).
Compression-Ignition Engine Fuel	Any product used for the generation of power in a compression-ignition internal combustion engine (i.e., a diesel engine).
Developmental Engine Fuel	An experimental motor vehicle fuel that does not meet current standards established by the Department, but which has characteristics that may lead to an improved fuel standard or the development of an alternative fuel standard.
Advertising Sign or Advertising Medium	A banner, sign, placard, poster, streamer or card, whether mounted or not, whether appearing on the same or different standards, or whether or not physically connected with each other, provided the advertising statement can reasonably be read as one advertising message.
ASTM International	A not-for-profit organization made up of producers, users, regulators, and consumers who meet on common ground for the purpose of writing consensus standards and testing methods for materials and products.

Questions and Answers for Consumers

The following information provides you with answers to frequently asked questions and should be used only as a guide and not considered to be a legal authority.



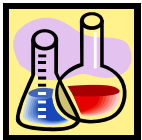
Who enforces the laws and regulations regarding petroleum products quality, advertising and labeling?

The Division of Measurement Standards and each County Office of Weights and Measures are jointly responsible for the enforcement of weights and measures laws and regulations in California.



How are the specifications for gasoline, diesel fuel, motor oil, gear oil, automatic transmission fluid, and engine coolants developed?

The State of California adopts by reference ASTM International and SAE International specifications for gasoline, diesel fuel, motor oil, gear oil, and engine coolants. Automatic transmission fluid standards are adopted from the automobile manufacturers' specifications.



How does the Petroleum Products Program sample and test gasoline and diesel fuel to determine if those products meet the quality specifications?

Samples of products are purchased from the marketplace openly by government officials or undercover. The samples are then taken to the Program's laboratory for testing.

Samples are tested using procedures developed by ASTM International. The following tests are performed on the listed products:

Gasoline – octane number, distillation, water and sediment

Diesel Fuel – cetane number, distillation, flash point, water and sediment

Motor Oil – viscosity

Automatic Transmission Fluid – viscosity

Engine Coolant (antifreeze) – boiling point and freezing point

Brake Fluid – boiling point



What does the Petroleum Products Program do when it finds products that do not meet the specifications?

After it is determined that the product does not meet specifications it is taken off sale and appropriate enforcement action is taken.



What methods does the Petroleum Products Program use to determine if the gasoline and diesel fuel dispensers are delivering the correct quantity?

Undercover vehicles are used and are equipped with special fuel tanks to determine if the correct quantity was dispensed.



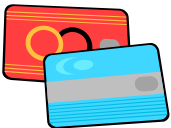
How does the Petroleum Products Program promote consumer confidence when purchasing petroleum and automotive products?

We randomly and constantly sample products in the marketplace for quality and quantity to ensure California drivers are using the highest quality products sold in the United States. We also respond to consumer complaints to prevent the sale of substandard products.



As a disabled driver, if I drive up to a self-service pump and the station attendant pumps my gasoline, am I entitled to get the gasoline at the self-serve price?

Yes. Because you are disabled, you are entitled to get the gasoline at the self-serve price.



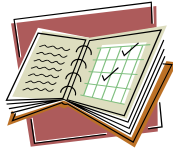
Can a station add a surcharge fee for the use of a credit card?

No. They cannot charge a surcharge according to the California Civil Code Section 1748.1(a).



Can a station charge a transaction fee for the use of a debit card?

Yes. However, the fee needs to be posted at the card reader.



My owner's manual says the tank in my car only holds 16 gallons but I was able to put 17-1/2 gallons into it. What is wrong?

There may be nothing wrong, sometimes manufacturers change the size of the tank in a particular car and the owners manual is not updated. Check with the dealer. If you are sure the manual is correct there might be a problem with the gas pump. Contact your local sealer of weights and measures or download the [Complaint Form](#).



Why is the price of gasoline and diesel fuel in California so much higher than other states?

The State of California operates its own reformulated gasoline and diesel fuel program that has more stringent requirements than the Federally mandated program. This leads to a higher cost of producing the fuel. Additionally, the local sales tax is added on top of the 18.4 cents per gallon Federal excise tax and the 18.0 cents per gallon State excise tax.

For more information regarding gasoline prices, please visit the California Energy Commission's website at:

<http://energyalmanac.ca.gov/gasoline/index.html>.



I just filled up my vehicle with gasoline or diesel fuel and now it pings/does not run right/quit running or I do not think I got all the gasoline/diesel fuel I paid for. How do I file a complaint?

The Division of Measurement Standards is responsible for enforcing the State's minimum quality standards for gasoline and diesel fuel as well and accurate quantity being delivered. Customers who experience problems after purchasing fuel or who feel they did not get the full amount should contact one of the Division of Measurement Standards' office locations or call their county office of weights and measures. Also, the Division of Measurement Standards' [Weights and Measures Complaint Form](#) is available at our "Forms and Publications" site.



Does a higher octane gasoline make my car run better or increase its horsepower?

You should use the octane level fuel for your car that is recommended by the manufacturer. Purchasing a higher octane fuel than the engine was designed to run on will not make it perform better or increase its horsepower.



I was filling up at a gas station and noticed that one of my tires was low. I asked the station attendant if he could turn the equipment on and found the equipment to be broken. What do I do?

Posted on or near the equipment is the 1-800-356-7057 number where you may call to file a complaint or you may also submit a [Complaint Form](#) online to the Division of Measurement Standards.



I bought gasoline and wanted to use the air machine to fill up my tire. The machine said that I needed to insert 50 cents to start it. Isn't air and water supposed to be free?

Gas stations are required to provide air and water free to customers who buy gasoline or diesel. You may have to ask the attendant for a token or to turn the equipment on for you. If the attendant does not give you a token or does not turn the equipment on, posted on or near the equipment is the 1-800-356-7057 number where you may call to file a complaint. You may also submit a [Complaint Form](#) online to the Division of Measurement Standards.