

As Oil Prices Surge, DLCA Reminds Fuel Retailers Approval Is Required Before Any Hike

With Brent crude hovering around \$110 a barrel, DLCA says fuel wholesalers, retailers, and marine service stations in the Virgin Islands must obtain written approval before raising gasoline, diesel, or propane prices.

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With fuel market uncertainty continuing to heighten public concern across the territory — Brent Crude oil was around \$110 a barrel as of Wednesday — the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs is reminding fuel wholesalers, retailers, and marine service stations that they cannot raise prices in the USVI without first obtaining written authorization from the department.

DLCA said today that the requirement remains in effect under a renewed order first issued on April 16, 2024. The department said the measure is part of the government's continuing effort to protect consumers and maintain fairness in the marketplace by ensuring that any proposed fuel price increase is reviewed before taking effect.

The requirement applies to fuel wholesalers, fuel retailers, and marine service stations throughout the territory. Under the order, businesses dealing in fuel, including gasoline, diesel, and propane, may only increase their prices after submitting a written request to DLCA and receiving approval from the department. DLCA noted that no price change may take effect until approval is granted.

To request a fuel price increase, wholesalers and retailers must submit the Notice to Change Price of Fuel form, including the amount of the proposed increase. They must also provide the date of fuel delivery and supporting documentation, including invoices reflecting the increased cost.

Commissioner Nathalie Hodge said the review process is intended to balance the realities facing businesses with the impact fuel prices have on the wider community.

"Fuel pricing directly impacts every resident and business in our community," she said. "We understand that businesses face rising costs, but there is a process in place to ensure that any increases are fair, justified, and properly reviewed. We expect all fuel retailers to follow that process."

The department said it will continue monitoring fuel pricing across the territory and will take enforcement action when necessary to ensure compliance.

Fuel retailers were reminded that any increase implemented without prior written authorization from DLCA may trigger enforcement measures under the commissioner's order. Violations may result in fines of \$200 per day for each violation. DLCA also warned that continued noncompliance may lead to further action, including the possible revocation of business licenses.

The release further noted that wholesalers or retailers seeking an increase beyond the amount initially authorized may petition the department again by submitting invoices and other evidence supporting the proposed additional increase.

DLCA said the order remains in effect until it is lifted by the commissioner.

The department is encouraging fuel retailers to review the order in full and make sure they are following all requirements. DLCA also said it stands ready to assist fuel wholesalers and retailers with the submission process and urged businesses to ensure that all required documentation accompanies their requests.

For more information or to obtain the Notice to Change Price of Fuel form, the department directed the public to the forms section of its website and said businesses may contact the DLCA Office of the Commissioner at (340) 725-5129 or the Division of Consumer Affairs at (340) 713-3522. The release also identified Matthew Padgett, director of Consumer Affairs, as a contact for additional information on the fuel price change form and submission process.