

The Virgin Islands Consortium

In Light Of Sudden Increase In Gas Prices, D.L.C.A. Reinforces Order Created To Curtail Unfair Prices

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ST. CROIX -- Gas prices on this island had fallen to as low as \$2.06 a gallon, a new reality that had worked in favor of residents, affording them to spend money that would have otherwise gone to gas, in other sectors of the economy -- restaurants, for example.

But in the past week or so, the price of regular unleaded gas per gallon did not just inch up; it surged from \$2.06 to an average of \$2.49 per gallon.

Calling gas an essential commodity, the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs, which has jurisdiction over such matters, issued a press release making known that it had reinforced an order that runs through February 2017 aimed at assuring fair prices.

“Although, consumers are responsible for making personal financial decisions, market research has shown a spike in prices within a short period of time. This precaution is necessary in order to promote fair competition, monitor compliance, and support the needs of essential commodity retailers,” said Devin Carrington, D.L.C.A. commissioner. The territory's gas retailers were officially notified with the correspondence detailed below.

ORDER:

Pursuant to VI Code Ann. Title 12A, § 176, the Commissioner of the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs, hereby sets forth the procedure to be followed by all wholesalers and retailers of gasoline and diesel fuel in the Territory as a pre-requisite to increasing their fuel prices. Accordingly, it is hereby

ORDERED, that **effective August 29, 2016**, all wholesalers of gasoline, gas stations and marine service stations on the islands of St. Croix, St. Thomas and St. John, shall only be permitted to increase their prices of gasoline and diesel fuel after submitting a written request to the Department showing the date of delivery, amount of the proposed increase, along with submission of an invoice evidencing the increased prices, and after receiving approval from same; and it is further

ORDERED, that any wholesaler or retailer of gasoline and diesel fuel wishing to further petition the Department for an increase above the amount authorized, may do so presenting invoices and other evidence justifying the proposed increased amount; and it is further

ORDERED, that additional increases shall not be permitted without the written authorization of the Department; and it is further

ORDERED, that any increase without the written authorization of the Department, shall result in a fine of Two Hundred Dollars (\$200.00) per day for such violation, and it is further

ORDERED, that any increase above the amount authorized, shall result in a fine of Two Hundred Dollars (\$200.00) per day for such violation; and it is further

ORDERED, that in the case of continued violations, the Department shall use all legal remedies available to it, including the initiation of proceedings for the revocation of the entity's business license(s); and it is further

ORDERED, that this Order shall remain in effect until **February 28, 2017**.

D.L.C.A. says it stands ready to assist all wholesalers and retailers of gasoline and diesel fuel in the Virgin Islands. Director of Consumer Affairs Services, Beatrice Gumbs, can be reached at (340) 714-3522 or interested persons may call the office of the commissioner at (340) 714-3522, St. Thomas and (340) 713-3522, St. Croix, D.L.C.A. says.