



RUNNIN' ON FUMES

Charlie Pike

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The Shell by Mammoth Liquor: \$6.25/gallon.

The Shell off Old Mammoth: \$6.35/gallon.

The Chevron: \$6.45/gallon.

The 76: \$6.45/gallon.

Moral of the story: fuel up on the south side of Main Street.

A recent article in the Wall Street Journal penned that this is the 13th consecutive week that gas prices have dropped across the country. The national average: \$3.70/gallon.

That's almost three dollars cheaper than the gas in Mammoth.

"Most of it has to do with California," says Russ Norton of Norco Service Center-Goodyear and 76. "Has to do with the regulations."

Regulations like an excise tax of gas that costs California drivers 53.9 cents a gallon at the pump, according to a recent article by Lara Korte at Politico. California says the revenue goes to road repair, bridge repair, and public transport.

In addition, California uses a special blend of gasoline that costs more to refine. The gas, which helps keep California's air clean, evaporates slower than typical gasoline. This specific blend can be harder to obtain and can cost 5 to 10 cents more per gallon at the pump, according to an article from FOX11 Los Angeles.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has also caused retail gas prices to spike "by at least one dollar in the U.S.," the CATO Institute found.

Another factor affecting prices: six out of twelve oil refineries in the state of California are out of operation due to maintenance, according to Politico. Low supply and high demand means higher prices.

"Under Trump, we had plenty of fuel," says Karl Teller of Mammoth's Chevron station. Teller blames the current administration for the high prices. "It's a vindictive move by the Democrats,"

he says. The party isn't following through with the idea of U.S. energy independence, according to Teller.

Supposing that energy independence means that the U.S. produces more energy than it consumes, as defined by Forbes Senior Contributor Robert Rapier, then the United States has remained energy independent through 2021. The country's net exports of crude oil and petroleum products for 2021 was 62,000 barrels per day, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. In 2020, that number was 635,000.

Still, Teller is right to some degree – the situation is political, and clean air is costly. According to Politico, conservatives want to suspend the gas tax to offer Californians relief at the pump. Instead, the state is mailing out refunds to taxpayers based on their filing status and income. Checks ranging from \$200 to \$1,050 should arrive in mailboxes come October, writes Politico's Korte.

"The margins are as bad as I've ever seen them," says Teller. He saw a 25 cent jump on Tuesday in the cost for the fuel he purchases for his station. Teller, who stocks up on fuel every three days, decided to wait the jump out and see if prices would fall come Wednesday.

Norton saw his price jump by 37 cents last week. "I get gas prices everyday," says Norton, "and they are going up everyday... Nobody tells me why. All they do is email me my prices in the morning."

Ken Sample, owner of Mammoth's Shell stations, declined to comment on the town's high gas prices.

It seems that gas prices are high for an array of reasons.

Norton sums it up like this: "It's just doing business in California. Everything's expensive."