

Governor Charlie Crist statement

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2008

CONTACT: GOVERNOR'S PRESS OFFICE
(850) 488-5394

Statement by
GOVERNOR CHARLIE CRIST
Regarding Florida's Fuel Supply and Gas Prices

"Currently Florida is watching Hurricane Ike approach the Gulf shores of Texas. The people of Texas are in our prayers, and we stand ready to help them in the recovery efforts following the storm. Last evening, I reached out to Governor Perry to let him know that Floridians are prepared to assist our neighbors in their time of need.

"It is important for the people of Florida to know that our state currently has an adequate fuel supply. Major fuel companies continue to deliver millions of gallons of gasoline and diesel to retailers and communities across the state. In addition, we are coordinating with the petroleum industry and representatives from the Florida Petroleum Council and Florida Petroleum Marketers and Convenience Store Association to ensure that there is fuel to meet current consumer needs.

"Despite this fact, there are confirmed reports of gas stations charging more than five dollars a gallon, which can only be described as unconscionable. Raising rates to exorbitant levels like this only causes unnecessary panic and fear. This type of behavior will not be tolerated, and I pledge to work with Attorney General McCollum and Agriculture Commissioner Bronson to ensure swift and appropriate action is taken against all price gougers.

"To report suspected cases of price gouging, please call 1-800-HELP-FLA or 1-866-966-7226."

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<http://www.flgov.com/release/10219>

Attorney General Bill McCollum News Release

September 12, 2008

Media Contact: Sandi Copes

Phone: (850) 245-0150

Attorney General McCollum Issues Statement on Reported Gas Price Increases

TALLAHASSEE, FL - Attorney General Bill McCollum today issued the following statement on reported increases in the price of gasoline:

"The Attorney General's Office is receiving many complaints about dramatic increases in the price of gas in some parts of Florida. It is important for consumers and businesses alike to understand during a State of Emergency the prices of essential commodities, including gasoline, may not be increased unless the increased cost is a direct result of justifiable increases in cost within the industry. Any dramatic increase in price that cannot be justified is considered price-gouging and should be reported to the Attorney General's Office at 866-966-7226.

"The Attorney General's Office takes allegations of price-gouging seriously. We have had teams of investigators looking into complaints throughout the day and will continue to closely monitor the situation."

<http://myfloridalegal.com/newsrel.nsf/newsreleases/BFE81524E6C6665D852574C20079467B>

Attorney General Bill McCollum News Release

September 13, 2008

Media Contact: Sandi Copes

Phone: (850) 245-0150

McCollum: Price Gouging Complaints Are Being Reported, Investigated Thoroughly

****UPDATE: As of 4:00 p.m. on September 17, the Attorney General's Office had received 2,397 complaints about gasoline price gouging related to Hurricane Ike.****

TALLAHASSEE, FL – Attorney General Bill McCollum today released the following statement regarding his office’s ongoing investigations into allegations of gasoline price gouging:

“Today, investigators with my Economic Crimes Division are reviewing the 186 complaints we have received about gasoline price gouging in multiple locations throughout the state. The investigators have been contacting station owners and requesting documentation on the nature of the price increases to determine whether the increases in costs being passed along to consumers are justifiable.

“Our investigations will continue, and I encourage Floridians to stay vigilant and keep reporting complaints to my office. This information from consumers is essential to our investigators as they work to ensure businesses are not taking advantage of our consumers. Price gouging should be reported to my hotline, 1-866-966-7226.

“I also want to remind businesses that price gouging is prohibited during a declared state of emergency and that violations of Florida’s price gouging statute can result in penalties of \$1,000 per incident, up to \$25,000 per day. The Attorney General’s Office does not take allegations of price gouging lightly and my investigators will continue addressing each and every complaint throughout the weekend and into next week.”

<http://myfloridalegal.com/newsrel.nsf/newsreleases/1A4E76155DF74188852574C30067648A>

Attorney General Bill McCollum News Release

September 14, 2008

Media Contact: Sandi Copes

Phone: (850) 245-0150

McCollum Issues Subpoenas Investigating Gas Price Increases

TALLAHASSEE, FL – Attorney General Bill McCollum today issued a series of subpoenas to four companies seeking information about reported increases in the price of gasoline throughout the state. The subpoenas request documentation from the companies detailing the purchase prices the companies paid for gasoline sold at their Florida retail stores. The Attorney General issued the subpoenas after receiving more than 350 complaints about gasoline price gouging over a four-day period.

“Price gouging is strictly prohibited in Florida during a declared state of emergency and my investigators have been working throughout the weekend to determine whether Floridians are being taken advantage of,” said Attorney General McCollum. “Passing along a justifiable increase in cost to consumers is legal, but we will not tolerate gouging for greed.”

The subpoenas were issued to corporate offices of Flying J, Dodge’s Gas Stores, Valero and Pilot Travel Centers. Consumer complaints against these three groups of stations have been particularly high in several areas of the state, including the Tampa region, South Florida, Central Florida, and Tallahassee and the Panhandle. Service of the subpoenas will begin tomorrow and the Attorney General has requested the sought-after materials be provided within a week.

The Attorney General’s Office began receiving an increased volume of price gouging complaints on Thursday, September 11. Investigators with the Attorney General’s Economic Crimes Division have been reviewing each complaint and have been working to make contact with the gas station owners or corporate headquarters to obtain documentation related to pricing of the gasoline. As of 11:00 a.m. today, the Attorney General’s Office had received 317 complaints about gasoline price gouging related to Hurricane Ike.

According to Florida law, price gouging on essential commodities, including gasoline, is prohibited during a declared state of emergency. The state of emergency for Hurricane Ike was issued by Governor Crist on September 5, 2008. Price gouging is an unjustified increase in the price of a commodity compared to the average price for the 30 days prior to the declaration of a state of emergency. The statute does permit businesses to pass along cost increases to consumers if those increases can be justified due to higher purchase prices, etc.

The Attorney General encouraged Floridians to continue to report price gouging to his Price Gouging Hotline at 1-866-9-NO-SCAM (1-866-966-7226).

<http://myfloridalegal.com/newsrel.nsf/newsreleases/C28731D3F29DC1F2852574C4005E67D3>

Commissioner of Agriculture & Consumer Services press release

09-15-2008

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**Bronson Reports Huge Spike In Price Gouging Complaints;
Subpoenas For Fuel Company Records To Be Issued Later Today**

TALLAHASSEE - Florida Agriculture and Consumer Services Commissioner Charles H. Bronson today announced that his office received nearly 2,200 price-gouging calls over the weekend and 816 complaints - virtually all involving the price of gasoline.

All of the complaints are being investigated, and subpoenas will be issued later today for oil company records to determine whether increased wholesale prices that were passed on to retail gas stations were justified.

"We are committed to making sure that Florida residents and visitors to our state are being treated fairly," Bronson said.

Under state law, persons or companies engaged in price gouging - defined in the law as charging excessive prices for basic commodities such as fuel, shelter, water, ice and lumber during a state of emergency - face fines of up to \$1,000 per violation up to a maximum penalty of \$25,000 a day.

Bronson is encouraging any citizen to report price-gouging activity that they encounter to his toll-free hotline at **1 800 HELP FLA (435-7352)**.

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<http://www.doacs.state.fl.us/press/2008/09152008.html>

Commissioner of Agriculture & Consumer Services press release

09-15-2008

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Bronson Seeking Records Of 16 Oil Terminals In Price Gouging Probe

TALLAHASSEE – Florida Agriculture and Consumer Services Commissioner Charles H. Bronson announced today that he is issuing subpoenas for financial information from 16 major oil terminals in Florida in connection with an ongoing investigation of gasoline price spikes associated with Hurricane Ike.

The subpoenas are scheduled to be hand delivered to the terminals on Tuesday, and they are seeking records to determine whether any of them illegally increased the wholesale prices that were passed on to retail gas stations and ultimately their customers. The subpoenas call for the records to be provided to Bronson's office in seven days.

"It's critical that we go to the source," Bronson said. "A number of gas stations are claiming that they are only passing on increases that they have had to pay, so it is vital to examine where these price increases originated."

Under state law, it is unlawful to charge excessive prices for essential items, including gasoline, water, ice, lumber, batteries and shelter, following the declaration of a state emergency unless the increases in the amount charged are attributable to additional costs incurred by those supplying the items.

Individuals or businesses found to have engaged in price gouging face fines up to \$1,000 per violation, or up to a maximum fine of \$25,000 a day.

Subpoenas are being issued to the following companies: [2008 Price Gouging Terminals](#).

Meanwhile, more than 2,300 price-gouging calls were received by Bronson's office during the last 3 days, and the volume of calls remains heavy.

Consumers who have been the victims of price gouging or have witnessed such activity are encouraged to call Bronson's toll-free hotline at 1 800 HELP FLA (435-7352).