

How to Lessen the Effects of Spikes at the Pump

With gas prices rising daily, fuel and energy conservation are on the minds of many South Carolina consumers. While the recent, steep changes in the price of fuel are challenging to all consumers, it is not price gouging. Price gouging applies if the Governor declares a state of emergency or the President declares a state of disaster. Price gouging also applies when the Attorney General gives notice of an abnormal disruption in the market resulting from specified events, including an electrical shortage, force of nature or a strike.

Fuel prices are determined by the market forces of supply and demand. With economists predicting more gas price increases, SCDCA offers the following tips to help you stretch your dollar and get the most out of your gas purchase:

- **Combine trips.** Run as many errands as possible in one trip and carpool when possible.
- **Use overdrive gears and cruise control when appropriate.** They improve fuel economy when highway driving.
- **Slow down!** You can cut your gas usage by driving the speed limit.
- **Empty your trunk.** An extra 100 pounds in the trunk can reduce a typical car's fuel economy by up to two percent.
- **Maintain your vehicle.** Keep your engine tuned and tires inflated and rotated.
- **Try to accelerate and brake gradually whenever possible.** "Jackrabbit" starts and stops can decrease efficiency up to five percent.
- **Avoid long idles.** Turn off your engine if you are waiting in your vehicle for a long time.
- **Use the octane level you need.** Your owner's manual recommends the most effective octane level for your car.

You can also check the US Department of Energy's fuel economy website to find the gas station in your area with the lowest fuel prices: www.fueleconomy.gov/feg/gasprices/states/index.shtml

SCDCA aims to protect consumers from inequities in the marketplace through advocacy, complaint mediation, enforcement and education. To file a complaint or for information on consumer issues, visit www.sconsumer.gov or call toll-free, 1-800-922-1594.