

With Gasoline Prices on the Rise, Mercer County Officials Will Conduct Inspections of Gas Pumps

Mercer County Executive Brian M. Hughes said he called for random inspections at service stations throughout the county in an effort to prevent price gouging and to identify defective gas pumping equipment.

By [Michael Ratcliffe](#) | [Email the author](#) | March 9, 2011

With gasoline prices seemingly increasing every day as a result of the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, Mercer County's Office of Weights and Measures will be making random inspections at service stations around the county.

Mercer County Executive Brian M. Hughes, who initiated a countywide testing program for service stations in 2006 as a result of gas price increases then, said he called for the new round of random inspections in an effort to prevent price gouging and to identify faulty gas pumping equipment.

"It seems like in a matter of days – and sometimes more than once daily – consumers are seeing prices ratchet up at their local gas stations," Hughes said. "We want to ensure that not only are they getting exactly what they pay for at the pump, but that gas stations are abiding by rules that limit how frequently they can raise prices, and how prominently they must display prices and whether those prices are for cash purchases or credit purchases. Our weights and measures professionals will be on the street working for you."

Weights and measures inspectors will, among other things, make sure that all service station equipment has been properly registered with the state, that the actual price paid for gas is consistent with the advertised price, that gas pump displays are visible to the purchaser, that the pump meter starts at zero and stops charging when the gas stops pumping, and that pump hoses do not leak, according to Hughes.

He said inspectors – using a computerized system that makes calculations instantly and eliminates human error – will also "conduct volumetric testing to prevent excess water in storage tanks and conduct octane testing to ensure octane ratings are accurate."

Service stations, by law, are allowed to raise their prices only once per 24-hour period, Hughes said, noting that any station caught raising their prices multiple times in a single day and stations where other violations are found will be fined by the county and ordered to stop selling gas until corrective action has been completed.