



March 19, 2026

The Division of Petroleum Market Oversight (DPMO), an independent division of the California Energy Commission, is providing this enforcement bulletin and consumer advisory to protect Californians and provide additional transparency amid rising oil and fuel prices.

Enforcement Bulletin

The initiation of armed conflict in the Middle East is “creating the largest supply disruption in the history of the global oil market.”¹ Because crude oil and transportation fuels are priced on national and global markets, this conflict has driven up gasoline, diesel, and jet fuel prices for consumers across the country.²

These price increases follow two years of stable, lower prices for California consumers: California retail gasoline prices per gallon averaged \$4.71 in 2025 and \$4.98 in 2024, compared to \$5.36 in 2023 and \$6.21 in 2022 (2026 dollars).

DPMO is closely monitoring the refining, wholesale, and retail market segments to ensure that firms do not opportunistically raise prices in a manner that is disproportionate to changes in their own input costs. Reports of price gouging will be taken seriously and DPMO is already engaging with gasoline retailers whose high prices may not be justified by increases in their input costs. Market participants that engage in unfair or anticompetitive conduct will face scrutiny and any illegal conduct will be referred for prosecution, including attempts to artificially raise prices.³

Consumer Advisory

In many parts of California, the gap between unbranded and branded gasoline prices can be significant, approaching or even exceeding \$1 per gallon. DPMO continues to encourage Californians to shop around for less expensive gasoline,

¹ International Energy Agency, “Oil Market Report – March 2026” (March 12, 2026), <https://www.iea.org/reports/oil-market-report-march-2026>.

² Emmett Lindner, “America is an Oil Exporter. Why Does a Mideast War Raise U.S. Gas Prices” (March 10, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/03/10/business/gasoline-price-energy-costs.html>.

³ In May 2020, the Attorney General sued two international trading companies for manipulating the California gasoline market during an exacerbated supply disruption and price spike in 2015. As alleged, the trading firms reported trades to OPIS to move up the spot market price to inflate the value of other contracts pegged to the OPIS-reported price. See Complaint, *The People of the State of California v. Vitol Inc., et al.*, No. CGC-20-584456 (S.F. Super. Ct.).

which is often “unbranded” or generic gasoline. Consumers can be confident in fuel quality because all gasoline sold in California must meet stringent standards, which are the strongest in the nation and require an effective detergent or cleaning additive to protect engine performance. No public studies have shown that gasoline with brand-name additives is any better for vehicles than unbranded California gasoline.⁴

⁴ DPMO, “2024 Annual Report” (October 2025), at pp. 23-24, <https://www.energy.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2025-10/CEC-900-2025-001.pdf>; CEC, “Additional Analysis on Gasoline Prices in California” (Oct. 21, 2019), at pp. 8-9, https://www.energy.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2019-11/Gas_Price_Report.pdf.