

News from the Oklahoma Corporation Commission

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CALM BEFORE THE STORM

Commissioners urge motorists, gasoline retailers to use restraint

(Oklahoma City) Oklahomans who “panic buy” at the gasoline pump because of fears of Hurricane Rita’s possible impact may unwittingly cause a gasoline shortage, warned the Oklahoma Corporation Commission today.

Commission Chairman Jeff Cloud said buying gasoline more often or in greater amounts than you normally would causes gasoline stations to run through their allocated amounts far more quickly than planned.

“What happened back during 9-11, and more recently after Hurricane Katrina, was that gasoline stations suddenly found themselves having to get a new allocation far sooner than had been scheduled,” explained Cloud. “While the gasoline supply was available at the pipeline, the problem was that so many new orders came from gasoline stations that delivery trucks weren’t able to keep up. That could have been avoided if consumers had simply not changed their gasoline buying habits.”

Commission Vice-Chairman Denise Bode said public concern over gasoline supplies is certainly understandable.

“With Hurricane Rita bearing down on the nation’s largest concentration of refineries, the media reports are full of dire “what-if” predictions,” said Bode. “There’s nothing we can do about the weather, but we can avoid the danger of a self-fulfilling prophecy, where predictions of skyrocketing prices and possible shortages lead to the kind of panic buying that will cause such a situation regardless of what actually happens with Rita.”

(more)

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Commissioner Bob Anthony said Oklahomans will be protected at the pump to the fullest extent of the law.

“Governor Henry and Attorney General Edmondson have made it clear that action will be taken against those who illegally gouge on prices for gasoline and other items during this time of emergency,” said Anthony. “The state’s price gouging law is in effect, and our fuel inspectors are out in full force. They will be reporting any suspicious price activity to the Attorney General, as well as making sure the Commission’s rules regarding the

posting of fuel prices are followed.”

The rules state any gasoline price sign must match the price at the pump and require that the posted price be “easily readable.” The inspectors also check fuel quality and measure.

Those who have complaints about the quality or measure of fuel they purchased can call the Corporation Commission’s Petroleum Storage Tank Division at (405) 521-4683, or the Commission’s main number, (405) 521-2211. Concerns regarding price gouging can be reported to the Attorney General at (405) 521-2029, or your local police department, or district attorney.

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