



## State of Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette

AG / MEDIA

### **Schuette: Department of Attorney General Won't Tolerate Gouging, Price Fixing at the Pump in the Wake of Hurricane Harvey**

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**LANSING** – As a result of Hurricane Harvey, the nation's largest oil refinery, in addition to many smaller refineries, have been shut down and it is possible Michigan drivers may see a slight spike in gas prices. In light of this, Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette today issued a warning to gas stations against any attempt to take advantage of consumers by price gouging or price fixing.

This outage has potential to have affects outside the states affected by the storm and Schuette made it clear to gas station owners that taking advantage of this type of disaster would not be tolerated.

"Labor Day weekend is days away and that means an uptick in cars traveling roads. Combined with the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey means Michigan families may see an increase in prices at the pump," said Schuette. "However, these circumstances do not constitute a free pass for gas stations to gouge consumers. We will not tolerate any unscrupulous behavior that violates Michigan law when it comes to gouging and price fixing."

### **Reporting Gas Gouging**

If consumers become aware of direct evidence concerning a conspiracy between companies, or have verifiable evidence of a retailer charging a price "grossly in excess of the price at which similar property or services are sold," they are encouraged to contact the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division at 1-877-765-8388 or file an online complaint at [www.michigan.gov/ag](http://www.michigan.gov/ag).

For more information on gas prices in Michigan see Attorney General Schuette's Consumer Alert: Increased Gas Prices? Again?

### **Department of Attorney General Monitors Gas Prices Year Round**

Every day, year round, Schuette's Consumer Protection team monitors the balance of wholesale and retail petroleum prices and profit margins in regions around Michigan. Additionally, the Department receives and reviews consumer complaints and inquiries about individual stations. The Department investigates any time there is evidence that state law has been violated for gouging or price fixing.

Under the Michigan Consumer Protection Act, a retailer may not charge a price that is "grossly in excess of the price at which similar property or services are sold." Anti-trust laws also prohibit gas stations from entering into agreements to arbitrarily fix prices in unison.

For example, as Attorney General, Schuette secured convictions for gasoline price fixing by five Michigan station owners in 2012. The Department has also entered into “compliance-agreements” with stations requiring them to submit to monitoring after they spiked prices well above the state-wide norm on a particular day or after a weather event.

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