

# Filling up costs more in Kansas; state taxes part of reason

WICHITA (AP) — Motorists everywhere are feeling the pinch of gasoline prices hovering around \$2-a-gallon, but Kansas drivers may be suffering more than their counterparts in surrounding states.

State taxes make gasoline consistently more expensive in Kansas than in most nearby states, except for Nebraska.

This weekend, for example, the average price of a gallon of regular unleaded gas in Kansas was \$1.99 compared with \$1.91 in Oklahoma and \$1.93 in Missouri, according to AAA's fuel gauge report, which

was updated early Saturday.

Kansas taxes gasoline 24 cents a gallon and 26 cents on diesel. Colorado levies 22 cents on gasoline and 20.5 cents on diesel, Missouri 17 cents on both, and Oklahoma 16 cents on gas and 13 on diesel. Only Nebraska's gasoline tax is higher, at 24.5 cents on gas and diesel. Some states also charge a special environmental fee that varies. Kansas currently charges a penny a gallon for gasoline and diesel to clean up pollution from service stations, raising Kansas' tax to 25 cents for gasoline and 27 cents for diesel.

The taxes are deposited in a highway fund used to repair old roads and build new ones.

Residents of Oklahoma and Missouri get to vote on whether to raise fuel taxes.

That's a bad idea, said Sen. Les Donovan, chairman of the Senate transportation committee. He said people will usually reject a tax increase, and that would leave Kansas' roads in poor shape.

"A lot of the states around us wish they could do something to improve their roads and highways," Donovan said. "Kansas is the envy of the

states around us."

But Kansas has used the fuel tax money for other needs in tight budget years.

"They have taken loans from the state highway fund, which includes the gas tax," said Krista Roberts, a spokeswoman for the Kansas Department of Transportation. This year though, the Legislature did not spend highway money elsewhere and took steps to protect money intended for roads, she said.

Nationally, on average, 24 percent of the cost of a gallon of gas is taxes, 44 percent is crude oil and 32

percent is refining and marketing, said Ed Cross, the executive vice president for the Kansas Independent Oil and Gas Association.

Take the 25 cent Kansas tax and add the 18.4 cents per gallon federal tax (24.4 cents on diesel), and consumers are paying 43.4 cents a gallon for taxes.

Some consumers assume that gas station owners are making huge profits when prices go up, said Jim Selenke of Parker Oil. But Selenke, whose company operates the Mini-Stop convenience store in Haysville, said early last week that his

cost was \$1.95 a gallon and that he was selling for \$1.99 a gallon.

"So I'm only making 4 cents a gallon," he said. "I didn't even make enough to refill the tanks at the current price." He also said he has to pay a 3 percent fee on each sale paid with a credit card. That eats into profits, he said.

The industry constantly fights "the difference between Kansas and Missouri and Oklahoma, especially on the borders," said Tom Palace, executive director of the Petroleum Markets and Convenience Store Association.

## Energy company performing leak checks

The Annual Yard Line Natural Gas Leak Survey is underway in many western Kansas cities.

Midwest Energy crews will be surveying all the lines in the cities served with natural gas for the next few weeks. Several rural lines will also be checked. The survey began the first of the month of May.

"The Department of Transportation requires that all lines be surveyed for leaks every three years," said Bob Helm, manager of Corporate Communications.

Midwest Energy has chosen to survey yard lines every year throughout their system.

"The company has an excellent safety record with their natural gas and electric service, and this is just one more way to continue that performance," he said.

Leaks are classified in several different categories. Those that need immediate attention, if found, are repaired immediately. Other leaks are repaired as necessary.

"The areas we checked last year are in really good shape. We have found very few leaks, and those were very small. It's good to know the system is working the way it's supposed to," he said.

Helms, along with others working on the lines, do ask that residents leave their gates unlocked, and restrain their animals, so they can check the yard line up to the house.

Midwest Energy, Inc. serves nearly 90,000 natural gas, and electric customers throughout central and western Kansas, and is headquartered in Hays.

## Sprint changing price for 'walkie talkie' service

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Looking to improve its position in the tight "push to talk" market, Sprint Corp. Monday said it is lowering the price of its PCS Ready Link service.

The Overland Park, Kan.-based company, which said it has signed up 275,000 customers for the nationwide walkie-talkie product since unveiling it in November, said customers wanting to add Ready Link to their existing service will now pay \$10 per month, down from \$15 per month.

In addition, the company said it is releasing a Ready Link-equipped phone next week costing less than half of the comparable product offered by competitor Verizon Wireless.

The Sanyo RL-4920, which includes a color screen equipped for Sprint's PCS Vision online service, would cost \$69.99 after rebates. Verizon's comparable V60p, made by Motorola, retails for \$199.99.

Company officials said the price cuts will help penetrate the consumer market, which has less experience with the service than industries like construction, landscaping and personal service.

"We're pleased with the result so far," said Jim Hallock, vice president of consumer marketing. "The timing is right for seeding the market and building the right base of customers, and we see this as adding fuel to the fire."

Verizon, which rolled out its own service last summer, declined to say

how many customers it has, but analysts said the numbers are comparable to Sprint's.

Both companies, however, still lag far behind industry leader Nextel Communications, which provides its Direct Connect service to all 12.9 million of its customers. The Nextel phones, which are marketed largely to business customers, are also considered technologically superior, providing less delay between transmissions.

"It still don't think (Sprint is) on par with what Nextel has because they've been doing it longer," said James Breen, a Boston-based analyst with Thomas Weisel Partners. "With Sprint and Verizon, when you look at their customer base, it's much more consumer. It's being marketed to a smaller group."

Still, independent telecommunications analyst Jeff Kagan said the changes should keep Sprint competitive until the technology changes to allow 'push to talk' customers of different phone companies to communicate. Once that happens, which Kagan said could be within the next few years, depending on consumer demand, Sprint could bring to bear its wealth of video and graphic capabilities.

"Right now, they're competing with one arm and one leg tied behind their back," said Kagan, who is based in Atlanta. "When interoperability comes, I expect the numbers to skyrocket."

Sprint has about 21 million U.S. wireless customers.

## Ticks a concern as weather gets warmer

*Editor's note: The Thomas County Health Department has provided the following article as a public service.*

*For questions about what services are provided or other information, call 462-4596 or stop by the office at 350 S. Range Ave., Colby.*

Each summer, new cases of tick-borne illnesses like Rocky Mountain spotted fever, Lyme disease and ehrlichiosis surge in the United States.

Hot zones for trouble include the Northeastern and Southeastern states, as well as parts of the Midwest, Texas and California. Almost anywhere ticks

lurk, however, you could find yourself in trouble.

Luckily, a few simple tips from

### Healthy Haps

the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention can help you and your family avoid tick trouble this summer and still enjoy the great outdoors.

If you live in a wooded area, remove leaves and clear brush and tall grass from around the house and the edges of the garden where immature ticks often reside. When you're hiking or camping in wooded areas, wear light-colored clothing so that you can spot any ticks that jump on board. Wear long pants and tuck the legs into socks or boots.

Some experts recommend putting tape around the area where pants and socks meet for added pro-

tection. Consider spraying insect repellent containing DEET on clothes. Stick to the middle of hiking trails to avoid brushing against leaves or grasses where ticks lie in wait.

Once you get home, inspect yourself carefully. Use a mirror to check difficult to observe parts of your body.

If you find a tick, don't panic. Removing it quickly can help prevent the transmission of disease.

Forget the advice about using a lighted match or cigarette to force the tick to back out.

Covering it with Vaseline doesn't work, either, says physician Michael Felz, M.D., a tick expert at the Medical College of Georgia in Augusta. Most likely you'll kill the tick

in place, making matters worse. Instead, grasp the tick with fine tweezers as close to your skin as possible and pull straight out.

Then clean the area with disinfectant.

Although it is best to have any tick bite examined by a doctor, this is especially true if a rash more than an inch wide appears at the site of a bite.

It could be a sign of Lyme disease. If you develop flu-like symptoms any time within a month after being bitten, it's also important to see a physician.

The symptoms could be a sign of ehrlichiosis, another serious tick-borne disease. (Taken from <http://content.health.msn.com/content/article/12/1685>.)



**Kansas is  
the leading  
beef  
state.**

**Beef Month is a time to reflect on the importance of cattle and agriculture to the state. Kansas beef producers play a vital role in providing the safest and most wholesome supply of beef to consumers around the world.**

**WE SALUTE THE  
AREA CATTLEMEN!!**

**BANKWEST**  
OF KANSAS



**SUNWEST**  
BANKS OF COLORADO

**VISIT OUR ATM  
LOCATIONS AT:  
Travelers &  
Village Inn**

295 N. Franklin  
P.O. Box 327  
Colby • 785-462-7557

**BANKLINE:  
1-888-828-BANK (2265)**

[www.ebankwest.com](http://www.ebankwest.com)

**BEEF....it's  
whats for dinner!**

**May is  
National Beef Month....**

celebrate it by  
putting beef on  
**YOUR table!**



COLBY, KANSAS

**Thomas County Feeders inc.**  
www.bktfeeders.com  
Cell: 785-443-1428

Custom cattle feeding the way you want it... personalized and dedicated to excellence.

**Mike Hunter, Manager**  
Email: [thcofe@grapevine.com](mailto:thcofe@grapevine.com)

1762 US 83  
Colby, Kan. 67701

785-462-3947  
Fax 785-462-7606

## Farm Credit of Western Kansas

*Serving the Beef Industry  
with a variety of  
financial services.*

**We Salute the Men and Women  
of the Beef Industry.**

1055 S. Range — Colby, Kansas

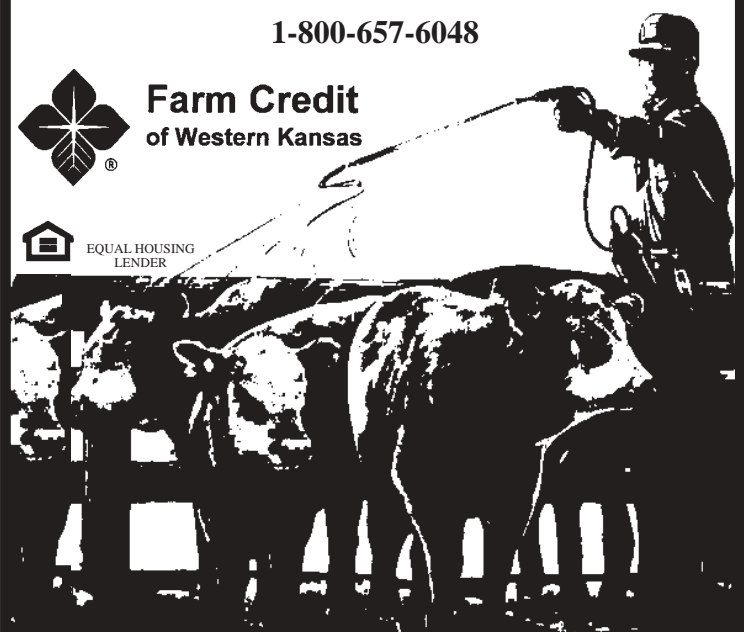
**1-800-657-6048**



**Farm Credit  
of Western Kansas**



EQUAL HOUSING  
LENDER



**Now YOU CAN HELP  
STOP CHILD ABUSE  
BEFORE IT EVER STARTS.**

To learn how you can help, call the National Committee to prevent Child Abuse today.

**Ad Council** **1-800-CHILDREN**

**d**

It looks like the perfect d.  
The only problem is, it's a p.

It's dyslexia. A reading disability where some kids confuse their d's with p's, b's and q's. But, with help most of these kids can go on to do well in school. Call 1-888-CRS-MIND now. There's no reason to be held back.

**Ad Council**

**American Profile**  
Celebrating Hometown Life  
(available in trade area only)

See American Profile Magazine in today's issue of the

**COLBY FREE PRESS**

Brought to you by  
the Free Press and:

**FIRST NATIONAL BANK**

1195 S. Range  
Colby, KS  
460-2000

*"Neighbors helping neighbors"*