

**WCAX News**  
**October 14, 2010**

## **Gas prices pumping up**

Vermonters say they are fed up with spending so much money to fill up.

"I used to put in 20 bucks and fill up my tank," said James Randall of Burlington. "Not even close anymore."

Randall says he has had to portion the amount of money he spends on fuel per month lately. "It's almost like having another monthly bill," he said. "Add it on top of electric and cable, now you've got this much gas. I never used to think of it like that."

In January, the average price of gas in Vermont was \$2.76. It dropped to \$2.68 in September. But it's been climbing over the last few weeks and now the average price for a gallon is \$2.82.

Experts say the supply of crude oil remains steady, but the price keeps rising because of the weakness of the U.S. dollar.

"That has gone up from \$75 over midsummer, to over \$82 today," said Matt Cota of the Vermont Fuel Dealers Association.

This summer, President Obama signed a financial reform act which would help control major fluctuation in gas prices and lower credit card swiping fees for retailers, but the law has yet to take effect, and experts predict it may not until 2011.

"It is the hope of the retailers that the prices do go down," Cota said. "Retailers do not make any more money when the price goes up; in fact they make less money. They have to borrow money in order to purchase that product and the higher the cost is, the higher their borrowing cost."

Vermonters say changes at the pump mean changes in their daily lives to make up for it.

"My pay doesn't go up any more when that happens so it just makes it harder to live," said Mike Stokes of Vergennes.

"I do not think it is a reasonable price at all, but you do what you have got to do so," Randall said.

Asked if Vermont could expect to see the price reach the \$3 mark before the end of the year, Cota said it is very difficult to predict gas prices, but he didn't rule it out.

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