

Transport Topics

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Diesel Drops 5.2¢ to \$2.781 In 3rd Straight Weekly Decline

By Michele Fuetsch
Staff Reporter

The U.S. retail diesel average dropped 5.2 cents to \$2.781 a gallon last week, the third straight weekly drop, the Department of Energy reported.

The three-week price slide totaling 9.8 cents followed a climb that had taken diesel to \$2.879 a gallon, its highest level since November 2008, DOE said Feb. 1 after its survey of fueling stations.

The agency also reported that the average gasoline price dropped for the third week, falling by 4.4 cents a gallon to \$2.66.

Despite the declines, diesel is 53.5 cents higher than a year earlier while gasoline is 76.9 higher, DOE said.

Diesel is linked to the price of

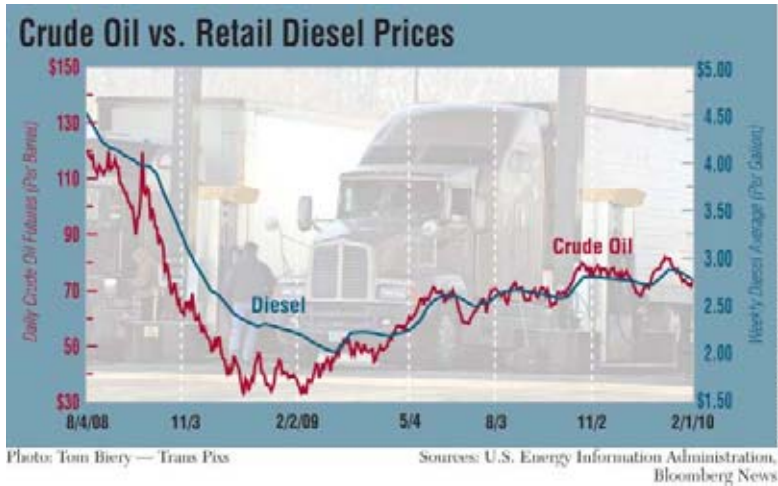
crude oil and “in the last couple weeks it’s actually been down quite a bit,” said Chris Barber, an oil market analyst at Energy Security Analysis Inc. in Wakefield, Mass.

Crude, which reached a 15-month high of \$83.18 a barrel on Jan. 6, closed on the New York Mercantile Exchange Feb. 4 at \$73.14 — a \$3.84 plunge from the previous day and the biggest drop since July 29, Bloomberg News reported.

Lower fuel prices were welcomed at trucking firms in some of the regions of the country.

“A little light at the end of the tunnel,” said William Hartt, president of Hartt Transportation Systems Inc. of Bangor, Maine, which hauls for paper mills and Poland Springs, the water company.

(See FUEL, p. 34)



Execs Warn on CSA 2010

Safety Rating System Seen as ‘Game Changer’

By Dan Leone
Staff Reporter



McCaure Photography

ATA’s Graves addresses Qualcomm meeting in San Diego.

SAN DIEGO — CSA 2010, the new federal safety monitoring and rating system for motor carriers, is likely to be the most important and potentially disruptive federal policy development for trucking to come out of Washington this year, fleet executives and industry watchers said last week.

American Trucking Associations President Bill Graves said CSA 2010 — or the Comprehensive Safety Analysis program — which is set to supplant the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration’s SafeStat system, is “at the top of the

list” of federal policy issues that will affect the trucking industry in 2010.

“Many of you are going to have to become experts about CSA 2010 in a way that you never in your wildest dreams imagined,” Graves told an audience of trucking and technology executives gathered here Feb. 1.

Robert Lowe, president of refrigerated carrier and flatbed carrier Prime Inc., Springfield, Mo., said that CSA 2010 will be a “game-changer” for trucking companies. The initiative will push more technology into trucks and push cash-strapped truckers who cannot afford the technology out of the market entirely, Lowe said.

Lowe and Graves spoke here last week at Qualcomm Inc.’s Vision 2010 user conference.

Unlike the current SafeStat program, which assigns safety ratings based on infrequent compliance reviews by federal auditors, the Department of Transportation’s CSA 2010 program will base safety ratings on carriers’ on-highway performance.

In contrast with SafeStat ratings, which can remain static for years, FMCSA has said that CSA 2010 ratings will be updated monthly to reflect enforcement actions and inspections by local and state law enforcement agencies.

In another departure from the current system, drivers’ violations will affect a carrier’s overall rating. Drivers themselves, however, “don’t receive a formal rating”

DOT Budget Proposes \$4 Bln. For New Infrastructure Bank

By Sean McNally
Senior Reporter

The Obama administration last week proposed a \$4 billion “down payment” on a national infrastructure bank to supplement traditional highway funding, as part of its \$78.8 billion budget proposal for the Department of Transportation.

The bank, which could grow to \$25 billion, would provide “grants and loans for innovative multimodal projects,” Transportation

Secretary Ray LaHood said, and would sidestep spending from the Highway Trust Fund.

Aside from the infrastructure bank proposal, the administration’s 2011 budget calls for essentially flat spending on highways and calls for further delaying reauthorization of the highway program because of concerns about how to fund it.

Creating the new National Infrastructure Innovation and Finance Fund fulfills a campaign promise

(See BUDGET, p. 32)

(See CSA, p. 32)

Bankrupt IdleAire Inc. Closes Down After 10 Years Of Offering Idle-Reduction Facilities at Truck Stops

By Rip Watson
Senior Reporter

IdleAire Inc., which used federal funds to help build equipment to reduce truck-stop idling and increase drivers’ off-duty comfort, shut down abruptly on Jan. 29.

The company, founded in 2000 to deliver communications, entertainment and cab temperature control through a single electric hookup at truck stops, had been operating in bankruptcy since May. Industry officials said the

company was overwhelmed by powerful technological and economic forces.

Backed by as much as \$55 million in U.S. Environmental Protection Agency funds, IdleAire had intended to reduce emissions by allowing resting drivers to avoid idling their engines. The closing halted operations at 131 locations, primarily TravelCenters of America and Petro Stopping Centers.

“IdleAire was doomed,” said Ike Brown, vice chairman of NFI Industries, because the recession reduced the number of trucks on

the road that could stop at places where the equipment was installed.

At the same time, Brown said, advancements in auxiliary power units and computer technology overtook the package of services that were bundled into IdleAire’s delivery system — an air duct linked to electronic overhead power at each parking spot.

“We switched to APUs,” he said, “because the technology came along far enough. At the start [IdleAire] was more economical,

(See IDLEAIRE, p. 34)



Bruce Harmon — Trans Pix

A cab uses an IdleAire hookup at the TravelCenters of America facility in Aurora, Ore.

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■ **TMC** — Annual meeting for ATA’s Technology & Maintenance Council looks at trucks of the future and management advice for today. — P. 4.

■ **DISTRACTIONS** — State traffic law officials suggest they may soft-pedal enforcement of the driving-texting ban until FMCSA issues a regulation. — P. 3.

■ **UPS** — Biggest company in trucking earned \$757 million during the fourth quarter. — P. 3.

Diesel Prices -5.2¢

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Self-serve

Feb. 1	\$2.781
Jan. 25	\$2.833

Source: Department of Energy