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## Gas station fined for alleged price gouging

Posted by Matt Rocheleau March 23, 2012 03:24 PM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

The city has fined a gas station on Southampton Street for alleged price gouging.

Amid customer complaints of pricing irregularities, the ExxonMobil received a pair of \$75 fines Tuesday for selling both regular and mid-grade gasoline at higher prices -- 2 cents higher for each of the two fuel options -- than advertised, according to a copy of the civil citation document.

Investigators from the city's inspectional services department visited on Monday and found the gas station had increased the fuel prices drivers were being charged at the pump, but did not change pricing figures listed on signage around the station, officials said.

"This type of practice known as the 'bait & switch' tactic is a clear violation of consumer rights," city officials said in a statement. "The protocol for implementing price changes at gasoline stations is as follows: when a price change occurs, the station must change the signage first at the pumps and then adjust the fees in the computer."

Because it was a first offense for the location and did not appear to be intentional, city inspectional services saler of weights and measures Bob McGrath said the station only received two fines -- one for each misleadingly-priced type of fuel -- rather than one fine for the 16 pricing signs located around the station, each of which was a fineable violation. He said that subsequent offenses, or violations that appear intentional, are subject to higher fine amounts.

The gas station is located at 85 Southampton St. near where the roadway meets with Massachusetts Avenue, Melnea Cass Boulevard, and the Mass Ave. Connector. State records show Exxon Mobil Corporation leases that property from McDonald's Corporation, which operates a fast food restaurant in an adjoining lot.

The station is managed by Kevin Henderson, the citation says. Reached by phone Friday morning, station management declined to comment immediately.

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immediately.

The business can appeal the citation within seven days of receiving the fine.

The investigation into the incident and subsequent fine were issued by city inspectors. Earlier this month, amid rising gas prices, [the state announced](#) its inspectors would step up efforts to ensure that gas stations are not engaged in price gouging, false advertising and other deceptive practices.

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