

# Petroleum Product Overpricing

SEATTLE — Investigations of petroleum products overpricing during the month of July resulted in more than \$300,000 in refunds to customers in Alaska, Idaho, Oregon and Washington, according to Northwest Federal Energy Regional Administrator, Jack B. Robertson.

FEA investigators completed 147 investigations during the month and found 81 violations of price regulations, 77 of which were at retail gasoline outlets. Other pricing investigations included heating oil and other middle distillates.

Refunds to the general public through gasoline outlets totaled \$291,900. These refunds are ordered when FEA investigators find that a particular dealer has been overcharging. The dealer is asked to roll back his prices enough to make up for the amount he has overcharged.

In the case of heating oil and other middle distillates, the actual customers can be identified and refunds are made to those customers. The amount of refunds during July for heating oil and other middle distillates was about \$8,000.

“We are now into a point in our compliance activities where we can give some special attention to follow-ups of previous violations.

The first pricing offense may stem from misunderstandings about the regulations, but once our investigators have visited a dealer there is no excuse for another violation,” he said.

Maximum penalties for pricing violations under the Mandatory Petroleum Allocation regulations are \$2,500 for each civil violation and \$5,000 for each criminal violation.