

NOZZLE & WRENCH



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- >> Cost Reduction Tips for Fuel Operators

Everyone wants their employees to have the best but at some point, you must look at business cost.

KIRK'S CORNER

Legislative 2022



By Kirk Mccauley,
Director Of Member
Relations &
Government Affairs

Maryland

WMDA/CAR had planned to go over our legislative issues and upcoming bills at WMDA/Car general membership meeting. COVID infections have accelerated to the point where we do not think a breakfast meeting would be in best interest of members or staff. With the meeting on hold I will go over one of the bills that has been prefiled before opening session in Maryland on January 12th, DC that is open year around and Delaware opens January 11th.

We will have a general membership meeting when members will be more comfortable in a group setting. In the meantime, please call if you have any question on legislative

issues or questions on any regulatory issues with state agencies. Bill numbers are active, and you can read the bill as presented.

Maryland has 420 bills prefiled (220 senate and 200 house) as of January 3, 2022, before session is over, the normal bill count averages around 2700 bills. The bills listed below are bills that will affect our members' businesses that were prefiled.

Bill/ cross file	Title	Sponsor	First reading	Committee
HB0008	Labor and Employment – Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program – Establishment (Time to Care Act of 2022)	Delegate Valder-rama	First Reading Economic Matters	Economic Matters
HB0046	Vehicle Emissions Inspection Program – Not Subject to Inspection – Fee	Delegate Fraser-Hidalgo	First Reading Environment and Transportation	Environment and Transportation
HB0060	Environment – New Motor Vehicles – Pollution Fee	Delegate Fraser-Hidalgo	First Reading Environment and Transportation	Environment and Transportation
HB0072	Maryland Wage and Hour Law and Maryland Wage Payment and Collection Law – Revisions (Maryland Wage Protection Act)	Delegate Charkoudian	First Reading Economic Matters	Economic Matters
HB0131	Environment – Synthetic Turf and Turf Infill – Chain of Custody	Delegate Lehman	First Reading Environment and Transportation	Environment and Transportation
HB0135	Environment – Single-Use Plastics – Restrictions	Delegate Love	First Reading Economic Matters	Economic Matters
HB0144	Motor Fuel Tax Rates - Consumer Price Index Adjustment - Repeal	Delegate Morgan	First Reading Ways and Means	Ways and Means

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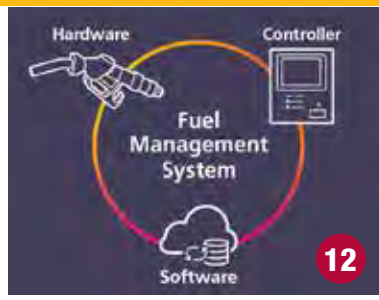


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Bill/ cross file	Title	Sponsor	First reading	Committee
HB0171	Climate Crisis and Environmental Justice Act	Delegate Fra-ser-Hidalgo	First Reading Economic Matters and Environment and Transportation	Economic Matters Environment and Transportation
SB0078	Maryland Wage and Hour Law and Maryland Wage Payment and Collection Law - Revisions (Maryland Wage Protection Act)	Senator Smith	First Reading Finance	Finance
SB0099	Cigarettes, Tobacco Products, and Electronic Smoking Devices – Local Law Authorization	Senator Kramer	First Reading Finance	Finance
SB0104	Vehicle Emissions Inspection Program - Not Subject to Inspection - Fee	Senator Kramer	First Reading Judicial Proceedings	Judicial Proceedings
SB0126	Environment - New Motor Vehicles - Pollution Fee	Senator Kramer	First Reading Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs	Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
SB0135	Climate Crisis and Environmental Justice Act	Senator Kramer	First Reading Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs and Budget and Taxation	Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Budget and Taxation
SB0146	Vehicle Laws - Plug-In Electric Drive Vehicles - Reserved Parking Spaces	Senator Young	First Reading Judicial Proceedings	Judicial Proceedings

The U.S. Department of Labor found that 40% of employees who took FMLA leave returned to work due to their inability to afford leave.

HB 8 is a family and medical leave bill and is the same bill we had last year (HB375 in 2021). You can click on 2021 fiscal and policy notes below and get a good idea of what this bill does. Dates will change when new fiscal notes are done. This bill as written would allow up to 24 weeks of leave, 12 for family leave section and 12 for sick leave.

Everyone wants their employees to have the best but at some point, you must look at business cost. 50% is from the employee and 50% is from employer and then the employer must replace the person or pay time and half to cover the shift especially in the case of our 24/7 operations.

Another observation is finding an employee to work 12 or 24 weeks and then be let go on return of the employee. Good luck finding that person. What does that do to unemployment insurance rates when temporary employee is terminated? One thing we have learned in this pandemic is if someone is getting paid to stay home, they will stay home or on vacation until money runs out.

Read what U.S. department of labor said in fiscal notes: The U.S. Department of Labor found that 40% of employees who took FMLA leave returned to work due to their inability to afford leave. By establishing FAMILI, more employees may take leave and take leave for longer periods of time.

This is another 'one size fits all bill' that a large employer might be able to manage better than a small employer challenged with limited personnel. Convenience stores, service stations and repair facilities all will feel effects should this bill pass.

These above observations apply to Maryland HB 8 and Delaware SB1, [2021 Regular Session - Fiscal and Policy Note for House Bill 375 \(maryland.gov\)](#)

I have just looked over the family and medical leave bill because MD and DE have bills remarkably similar. Looking at the rest of MD prefiled bills, you can see WMDA/CAR will need our members help in killing or amending these bills. We need members to testify on how these

bills affect their business and their employees.

Any questions, offers to testify, or any observations you would like to make, give me a call, or text - Kirk-301-775-0221

Howard County

The Minimum wage bill was amended after input from the business community, with wage increases spread out. Not perfect, but better. <https://apps.howardcountymd.gov/olis/LegislationDetail.aspx?LegislationID=12879>

Delaware

SB1 is a family and medical leave bill that will be pushed by senate early in the session, which opens January 11th. The family and medical leave bill as currently written, would allow for paid 12-weeks leave, and employees would be able to take an additional 4-weeks unpaid. That equals to a potential total of 16 weeks of leave eligibility for employees. The link is [Bill Detail - Delaware General Assembly](#) and look at the comments on MD HB 8. Almost all will apply to this bill also.



District of Columbia

DC has a gouging bill B24-126, this bill could put a dealer or repair facility out of business for an honest mistake. WMDA/CAR testified on this bill before council, and we have a meeting scheduled with Chairman Mendelson to discuss the unintended consequence this bill would generate. I will keep you posted <https://lims.dccouncil.us/Legislation/B24-0126>

On January 4th, District of Columbia has passed an emergency resolution and bill that supplies \$40 million in grant aid to among other, small retail business. There are limitations on who can receive it but it well worth reading. The language is simple and easy to understand. Repair facilities as well as stations and convenience stores <https://lims.dccouncil.us/downloads/LIMS/48524/>

[Introduction/PR24-0538-Introduction.pdf](#)
<https://lims.dccouncil.us/downloads/LIMS/48525/Introduction/B24-0592-Introduction.pdf>

There is no application listed as of this article but will be administered by deputy mayors' office at link below. Keep checking for application on web-site. <https://dmped.dc.gov/page/fy22-business-funding-opportunities>

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Resurgence of C.C. Skimmers?

Our friends at New Jersey Gasoline & Convenience & Automotive Association (NJGCA) are reporting that credit Card skimmers have been found on pumps and they are urging dealers to check their credit card reader immediately. I think that would be wise thing for all our members to do also. Normally they gain access to card reader and place a device inside the reader housing. Depending on design, some skimmers must be retrieved to download information, others can send information to a cell phone or laptop.

I have not had any reports from our members, but this type of activity tends to spread quickly. Checking for skimmers should be done daily along with your due diligence on hoses and nozzle's. ■

AirTag and Stalking



By Sandi Weaver
BA Auto Care, Inc.

I joined a networking group almost three years ago and being an introvert, it was not an easy thing for me to do. Each month we visit another member's place of business (recently virtual) to learn more about their business. Today was my turn to be visited by a fellow business owner. He also happens to be a customer of ours so he knows who we are and how we operate but he came prepared with questions and one question I couldn't answer. He asked what we do if we find an Apple AirTag on a customer's vehicle? And do we have the ability to scan a vehicle for one. This took me

completely off guard because I hadn't even known this was a problem but also not surprised at all that an Apple AirTag or any technology would be used to harm or hurt someone.

For those of you who haven't heard about, this like myself, thieves are putting Apple AirTags in/on vehicle to track high end cars and also to stalk people. While this is great for parents of young drivers, it is very scary to think someone is tracking you for their personal gain.

Over the years we had a few people call us to see if we can check their vehicle for tracking devices, if we had the equipment to do this. We have always recommended they contact the police department knowing there is usually a reason why they think they are being tracked like having a stalker and that is something we can't help with. But I feel we need to take a closer look into how we can protect our customers and their vehicles, especially from Apple AirTags and devices like it.

The point of the AirTag is to help track frequently lost items such as keys, wallet and even dogs. It tracks these using Bluetooth and iPhones in the area. Should you find something with an AirTag such as keys, you can use any phone with NFC (Near-field communication) to see if it was reported lost and return it to the owner.

iPhone users will get a notification that an AirTag is near them but that could be too late. Then there are those who have Android phones who won't get notifications from an Apple product. BLE Scanner is an app available for free (cost for some features) to both Apple and Android users that can help, albeit with limitations, by locating Bluetooth devices around you and put them by signal strength.

Should you find an AirTag that doesn't belong where it was found, such as on your person or vehicle, you can disable it by removing the battery (push down and twist).

This may not become a concern for auto repair shops but knowing what to do if you find one on a customer's car could save their life or at least their car. ■



...thieves are putting Apple AirTags in/on vehicle to track high end cars and also to stalk people.



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Hiring Non-Citizen Workers To Fill Management Positions

By James L. Parsons, Jr., Lynott, Lynott & Parsons, P.A.

...it is critical that the application for such visas and the supporting documentation contain accurate and credible information.

Gas station and convenience store owners who are unable to find acceptable U.S. citizen candidates for managerial positions may seek to fill the positions with non-citizen workers by obtaining employment visas or “green cards” for those workers. As a recent decision from the United States District Court for the District of Columbia illustrates, it is critical that the application for such visas and the supporting documentation contain accurate and credible information. In the case of *Rossville Convenience and Gas, Inc. v. Merrick Garland*, 2021 WL 5865446 (Memorandum Opinion filed December 10, 2021), the employer and the non-citizen worker learned the hard way that submitting less than credible information as part of a visa application may result in the denial of the application.

In the *Rossville* case, Rossville Convenience & Gas, Inc. (“Rossville”) sought to hire a non-U.S. citizen, Mr. Charaniya, as a store manager for its convenience store and gas station in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The Immigration and Nationality Act allows for employment visas to be made available to “skilled workers,” defined as “[q]ualified immigrants who are capable. . . of performing skilled labor. . . not of a temporary or seasonal nature, for which qualified workers are not available in the United States.” 8 U.S.C. §1153(b)(3)(A)(i). Visas issued under that section are known as “EB-3 visas,” which are permanent work visas or “green cards,” and a non-citizen who receives an EB-3 visa is also eligible to become a lawful permanent resident of the United States.

To obtain an EB-3 visa, the employer and non-citizen worker must follow a three step process. First, the non-citizen’s prospective employer must apply for and obtain a certificate from the Department of Labor (“DOL”). Second, after receiving a DOL certification, the employer must file a Form I-140 Immigrant Petition for Alien Worker with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (“USCIS”). Before the USCIS, the employer is considered the “petitioner,” and the non-citizen worker is considered the “beneficiary.” For “skilled workers,” the beneficiary must have at least two years of training or experience. If the petition is approved, the or beneficiary may undertake the third step in the process, which is to apply for permanent residence by filing an I-485 Application for Adjustment of Status with USCIS.

In 2002, Rossville filed for and obtained the DOL certificate with respect to Mr. Charaniya’s prospective position as store manager. Next, in 2003, Rossville filed a Form I-140 petition with USCIS on behalf of Mr. Charaniya. As part of the petition, Rossville submitted two “experience letters” from Mr. Charaniya’s previous employers. One letter, dated April 5, 2001, was from 4 B’s Food Mart in Oklahoma City, OK (“4 B’s”), and the second letter, dated July 4, 2002, was from Maharashtra Refrigeration in India.





On April 22, 2009, USCIS issued a “Notice of Intention to Deny” (“NOID”) with respect to Rossville’s I-140 petition. USCIS issued the NOID due to numerous inconsistencies in the experience letters and the other documentation submitted, which the USCIS found would support a “finding of fraud.” For example, the two experience letters, which were dated fifteen months apart and were from separate countries, were virtually identical in their wording. The letters also contained other errors, such as incorrect phone numbers and misspellings. One of the letters even provided dates of employment that were after the date of the letter. In addition, the biographic information form submitted with the application stated that Mr. Charaniya lived in San Antonio Texas at the same time that he was allegedly working at 4 B’s in Oklahoma City, OK—about 500 miles away.

Rossville responded to the NOID and tried to explain the inconsistencies as “typos,” and

provided additional evidence to support Mr. Charaniya’s required two years of experience. Eight years later, USCIS ultimately denied Rossville’s I-140 petition. The USCIS determined that the additional information submitted did not cure the earlier inconsistencies, and did not provide sufficient information to show that Mr. Charaniya possessed the required two years of experience. Rossville appealed the USCIS decision to the agency’s highest authority, and the decision was affirmed. Rossville then filed suit to challenge the USCIS denial of the petition, and ultimately, the decision was affirmed by the United States District Court for the District of Columbia in the *Rossville* case in its opinion filed on December 10, 2021.

The *Rossville* case illustrates two important points. First, an employer seeking to obtain an employment visa for a non-citizen worker must ensure that all information submitted with the petition is complete and accurate. It was clearly

obvious to USCIS that Rossville’s employment letters were not legitimate, because the letters were dated fifteen months apart and were supposedly from different countries, yet they used identical language and contained numerous errors. Second, this case shows how long the process can take for USCIS to rule on a petition for an employment visa. Rossville began the process in 2002, and the denial by USCIS occurred in 2017. While it is not clear from the decision, it is possible that Mr. Charaniya was able to work in this country while the petition for his employment visa was pending, provided that Rossville submitted the required application (Form I-765) and received an Employment Authorization Document from USCIS. The *Rossville* case also demonstrates that employers who are seeking employment visas for non-citizen workers should consult with experienced immigration attorneys to ensure that all of the required steps in the process are properly completed. ■

Omnichannel Marketing: The Secret to Maintaining More Leads

Brought to you by Netdriven

Think about how many communication channels you use in a typical day – email, phone, text, direct messaging apps and maybe more. The point is that no one sticks to one communication channel these days, including your customers.

According to Forbes, about **98%** of people in the US use multiple communication channels on a daily basis. And we all have our preferred channels.

As technology continues to open more doors to digital communication, businesses need to create a strategy that ensures their customers experience consistent communication no matter which channel they use. However, we understand that businesses are, well, busy and creating a consistent communication strategy is not a quick or easy feat. So how do you ensure that your shoppers have a consistent and positive experience no matter when or how they connect with your business?

Odds are that your business is already equipped with the digital tools that create a successful communication strategy. Now you just need to use these tools to their full potential by blending them together? A report by Omnisend revealed that combining three or more channels in a marketing campaign increases the purchase rate by **287%** because it draws in a higher volume of promising leads.

This act of blending communication channels into a streamlined experience for shoppers is known as omnichannel communication.

What is omnichannel communication?

Omnichannel communication is more than offering multiple channels – it means treating each channel as branded touchpoints of a single strategy. The shopping process becomes a consistent experience for your customers, regardless if they browse your website, message you on social media or call your store.

How can you successfully create an omnichannel strategy? First, it's important to see your communication channels as cogs in a larger system instead of standalone platforms. Once a prospect interacts with any cog (ie, communication channel), they are looped into the buying journey, and each of your channels should serve to propel them toward becoming a customer.

Importance of Omnichannel Communication

While most businesses today make a big effort to have a presence on multiple communication platforms, many don't create a branded, unified approach. As a result, customers go through a fragmented experience. Maybe you have encountered this yourself as a consumer: You call a business and have a great conversation on the phone, but when you come into the store, you have a very impersonal experience. Or



...businesses need to create a strategy that ensures their customers experience consistent communication no matter which channel they use.



perhaps the same business that's so helpful on the phone never responds to the question you posted on their Facebook. This hot-cold behavior can turn off customers, who aren't sure if the business really cares about them or not.

Omnichannel communication ensures that your prospects are impressed but not surprised by your customer service, and this plays a large role in driving customer conversions. In fact, **80%** of store visits are driven through omnichannel communication, reports Think with Google. Omnichannel communication successfully generates more leads because it allows shoppers to connect with your business on their preferred channels and still enjoy a consistent, personalized experience. Consider how blown away your customers will be when they reach out to your team and receive a quick reply that compels them to take the next step in the buying process and culminates in a hassle-free purchase!

Tips to Ensure Success with Your Omnichannel Strategy

A successful omnichannel communication strategy requires consistency to bolster the customer experience. Below we have listed some tips to help you

streamline your communication channels and maintain a low-effort yet effective strategy:

- **Utilize the right channels.** Before you dive in and try to be available on every possible channel, take some time to learn which channels are preferred by your shoppers. This could be Facebook, email, texting or live web chat. Keep your campaign manageable by targeting the channels already beloved by consumers.
- **Align your approach with your brand.** Your brand guidelines should be reflected in your design and messaging across your communication channels. No matter which channel a shopper uses, they should experience a sense of familiarity. This also builds recognition for your brand as it leaves no doubt in shoppers' minds that they have found the right business page.
- **Set customer service standards.** Coach your team to follow a consistent standard when responding to customer inquiries and following up with prospects periodically during the sales process. Customer loyalty is fostered on a reliable and hard-earned business reputation, which is fueled by team unity.
- **Collect customer data on a single platform.** Managing multiple communication channels means customer data will be coming your way left and right. To ensure you aren't run ragged trying to capture customer shopping behaviors and requests, we encourage you to consolidate your customer data on a single platform, such as your website. This enables you to have a complete view of each lead's journey from start to purchase and truly understand what your customers want.
- **Utilize your data metrics.** Create metrics that track the outcome of every lead interaction and help you determine how likely each lead is to convert. This allows your team to prioritize new leads and helps you gauge the efficacy of your omnichannel strategy.

Concluding Thoughts

Creating a streamlined communication strategy makes it easy to connect all of your channels together and deliver a highly polished customer experience. Omnichannel communication increases shopper enthusiasm because it enables shoppers to utilize their favorite channels and enjoy premium service. ■

Cost Reduction Tips For Fuel Operators

By Tony Caputo, Warren Rogers Precision Fuel System Diagnostics

With the lingering pandemic, rising labor, delivery, fuel supply, credit card, and operational costs impacting fuel marketers and wholesalers today, cost-reduction is paramount until some form of normalization returns, if ever. The business environment has changed dramatically since the onset of the pandemic and operators who embrace technology and cost-reduction will more-likely achieve some sort of profit stabilization than those resistant to change.

Fortunately, there are many ways to lower your operational costs with the correct technology in place. Store automatic tank gauges (ATGs) and dispenser controllers can supply a wealth of information. This data can be safely-attained and curated to provide the insights needed to lower labor, maintenance, and oversight costs.

Many operators still rely on manual processes to manage their compliance, supply, auditing, and maintenance needs. These areas are only exacerbated by staff turnover, work overload, and reliance on manual-reporting processes. Here are just a few areas that can be better-managed with the right amount of attention.

Compliance Reporting

Without a proper fuel system monitoring system in place, the collection of 30-day compliance records from store ATG's can be a paperwork nightmare for compliance personnel. In older locations, where ATG-based testing (CSLD, SCALD, PLLD) is not possible, then more manual effort has to be made through 3rd party suppliers of leak detection (SIR, CITLSD). We know that ATGs can normally store up to 12 months of records, but obtaining those results via fax, mail, or other means, can require quite a bit of manual effort and staff follow-up. Less-savvy operators may be reliant on store or general managers to collect this information directly from the ATG every 30 days, fax or mail to corporate, and archive the records at store level should a regulator show up. Occasionally, the results may indicate that your testing has failed for the prior 30 days, putting you at risk of a fine or notice of violation by local regulators. In a worse-case scenario, if the reports are not pulled in the proper manner or in the proper timeframe, paperwork cleanup before an inspection can be time-consuming and result in additional fines for missing or overlooked paperwork.

With technology in place, monitoring software applications can poll and track these testing results every day and archive passing results every 30 days for years to come. Monitoring software can also produce reporting to alert you to any sites that are in jeopardy of not passing their current ATG-based 30-day testing period. This allows compliance staff to address the issues at hand **BEFORE** the tanks, lines, or sensors fail the first 30-day result. Free up your compliance staff from manual tasks and provide them with the technology to better-manage your outcomes and costs.



...there are many ways to lower your operational costs with the correct technology in place.



Filtered Alarm Management

Compliance and maintenance departments can also be overwhelmed with the amount of ATG alarms notifications that may be coming at them on a daily basis via fax, email, phone, or other reporting methods. In some cases, operators are reliant on store personnel to “hear the beep”, review the alarms, assess for importance, and communicate the alarms quickly and properly to corporate personnel or the owner. Unfortunately, alarms can become repetitive nuisances and go ignored if not handled properly, resulting in fines or serious leaks, downtime, and costly equipment failures.

Remote monitoring software can collect these ATG alarms, filter to the most-serious issues, and communicate the alarms to the right personnel without manual store interaction. This process eliminates much of the “noise” and inattention that manual ATG alarm reporting processes may cause. Alarms can then be electronically-tracked, including alarm clears, and archived for future regulatory visits, making an inspection an easier ordeal to manage.

Dormant Dispensers and Fueling Positions

A fueling dispenser can become inoperative for many reasons, costing the operator valuable throughput, disrupting supply deliveries, frustrating customers, and impacting profitability. Often, it is up to store staff to report broken equipment to the company maintenance department or an authorized service provider. Unfortunately, these manual reporting procedures may delay this notification and slow down necessary repairs. Once informed, the repair department can troubleshoot the dispenser over the phone, dial into the equipment, or send a service person to the location.

With electronic fuel system monitoring in place, software applications can detect when transactions are no longer occurring over a certain time period. By connecting electronically to the dispenser controller, totalizer movement can be monitored to track as transactions occur or when they no longer are taking place.

Inventory-level Reporting

With an electronic connection to the ATGs at your locations,

inventory levels can be captured in real-time and exported to the supply department or your 3rd-party haulers, at the desired cadence. Inventory levels for several or all locations can easily be communicated via excel sheet, .csv, or even API at more-advanced companies. These are much-more efficient methods than a reliance on time-consuming and risk-prone phone calls, faxes, emails, or other means. Real-time inventory levels can also be displayed on an online dashboard or fed to a **runout alert notification service**, decreasing the frequency of runouts and duration of downtime your sites may incur.

Slowing Flow Rates

With electronic connection to the dispenser controller(s) at a site, software can track and analyze the flow rate of fuel from every dispensing point over time and report upon dispensing positions that are flowing in a sub-par fashion. For example, for regular gasoline and auto diesel grades, the optimal flow per minute is in the 8-10 gallon range. For high-flow diesel, primarily at truck stops and travel centers, the desired range is in

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the 35-45 gallons per minute range. When fuel flow drops below these ranges, customer frustration grows and gallon throughput decreases as a result. When you manually-monitor for slowing flow, it is often the customer who is ultimately accountable to report the issue to store personnel. Unfortunately, it may be days or weeks before the complaints become noticeable enough to warrant a call to the service department or owner. In the meantime, throughput could have been reduced due to lost sales and back-ups at the fuel lanes.

Targeted Filter Changes

Using the flow rate reporting mentioned above, fuel filter changes can be targeted to only the dispensing points in need of maintenance. Often, a complaint that “unleaded is flowing slowly” results in filter changes to ALL fueling points where Unleaded is dispensed, increasing your maintenance costs. Normally, flow rate will deteriorate at your higher-use dispensers first. With the right monitoring software in place, maintenance personnel can target the dispensing points in need of a filter change and leave the other ones alone, resulting in 50-75% savings on filter changes. Not to mention the benefits of less downtime and increased throughput by better-maintaining your dispensers from a flow standpoint.

Water In Tank Reporting

With electronic monitoring software in place, custom reporting can be put in place to inform and track water as it enters your stores’ fuel systems. An online dashboard can display the tanks of most-concern before the issue becomes a problem for your customers or fuel phase separation

occurs. Interactive tank views can also help you to indicate the time and date when water entered the system or if a faulty water reading probe may be at play. Taking this approach can lower your costs by giving you the change to properly address water as soon as it enters your tanks.

Targeted Meter Calibrations

Today, operators may rely on state weights and measures or annual testing to ensure their meters are not holding back or giving away product. Annual meter testing is a great process to institute to ensure all meters are dispensing properly. However, there are times that the meters may stray off track between meter testing and cost you quite a bit in fuel costs through over-dispensing. By comparing product leaving the tanks and being dispensed over time, software can assess and indicate when a wide variance may be taking place. Often, you can then correct the issue and reap the savings well before an inspector lets you know or red-tags the dispenser. An additional benefit is that you can target correction only to the meters in need and not incur the cost of recalibrating all meters.

These are just a few of the many ways that technology and remote monitoring software can cut your costs and give you more control over your operation. ■

ELECTION 2022: WMDA/CAR PAC needs funds to Participate

Governor, Attorney General and Comptroller, along with delegates and senators are up for election in Maryland.

- ▶ **Ban on menthol cigarettes** in District of Columbia means there will be copycat bills in Maryland and Delaware this year.
- ▶ California **bans gas powered cars** by 2035, will MD, DE, or DC be next?
- ▶ Baltimore council members want to **ban new service stations** in the city, ban plastics, Styrofoam & sugary drinks. They have shut down many retailers with pad locks on doors, blaming business for crime. Police are telling our retailers you are on your own, hire security guards. They need to focus on crime, not plastic bags. The absurdity of actions like this underscores the need for new legislators.
- ▶ Labor and employee bills in all three jurisdictions would add thousands of dollars in **payroll cost** per year. While we have been successful in stopping or amending most bills, they will all be back this year.
- ▶ **Right to Repair** – New cars manufactured are installing devices in vehicles that send information over wireless networks to dealerships automatically.

As absurd as some of these bills are, they are real and affect all our members. These issues will be or already are in the legislative process. We need legislators who support retail business, do not be on the side lines.

Support your PAC and PROTECT your business.

We suggest \$150 per location however, any amount is welcome.

Please send contributions to: WMDAPAC 1532 Pointer Ridge Place, Suite F Bowie, MD 20716

Your fellow business owners and PAC officers,

Rick Agoris, *PAC Chairman*

Riaz Ahmad, *PAC Treasurer*



Five Things to Know About ADAS Today

By Steve Dawson, Hunter Engineering Company

More than 60 million vehicles now have ADAS, with the number increasing every year.

What comes to mind when you hear the term “ADAS”? ADAS is currently the fastest-growing automotive technology, so you may see calibrations as a fast-growing opportunity to expand your in-house service offerings. Or, because ADAS is the fastest-growing technology and still a bit unsettled, you may be inclined to just pass this complex business on to those more experienced with it. Whatever your view, there's a lot – quite a lot – to learn about calibrating advanced driver assistance systems. Here are five considerations that will help you speed up your ADAS learning curve. Better yet: The more you know, the less appealing you'll find the second option. ADAS is here to stay. ADAS-equipped vehicles aren't going anywhere; quite the opposite, in fact. Here are a few statistics to think about: More than 60 million vehicles now have ADAS, with the number increasing every year. At least one-third of these vehicles will need calibration following common services, such as a wheel alignment ADAS was available as standard or optional on 93 percent of vehicles manufactured in the 2018 model year. Virtually all vehicles now have some type of driver assistance system. As these systems increase in sophistication, the need to properly recalibrate them following common procedures also increases. Given this already widespread prevalence, ADAS just isn't something shops can avoid or ignore. To properly serve their customers, shops will have to become skilled at identifying, diagnosing and calibrating these systems or lose a lot of business to those that are. And it's got to be right. Whenever a shop performs ADAS work, driver safety is at stake. And in the era of self-driving cars, the stakes will continue to rise. Here's why. ADAS comes in two types: passive, where the driver is alerted to such things as lane drifting; and active, where the vehicle automatically takes some action, such as emergency braking. The more drivers come to rely on active, automatic ADAS functions, the more shops will need to become experts at calibrating them. Since safety is involved, liability is involved. But all ADAS components are important. Here's one example of how items of seemingly small consequence are actually big factors. If the calibration of ADAS cameras or radar is only half a degree off from manufacturer requirements, what seems “close enough” in the shop isn't close at all, because the margin of error increases with distance. Think of cameras and radar as a flashlight beam. The cone is tight near the bulb and expands as it spreads out. That half-degree misalignment will be 31 inches at 100 yards, and grow to a massive five feet at 200 yards. Such a variance risks seeing things that aren't there, or not seeing things that are. Diligence is always the best practice. Begin with brands you know, prepare a service blueprint, follow the requirements, and confirm and document your work. It's this dedication to getting ADAS right that separates your shop from the pack. When is calibration necessary? If techs and shops aren't yet fully up to speed on ADAS, imagine where customers are. It's unlikely they'll helpfully inform you it's time to reset the adaptive cruise control or forward collision warning. It's only a partial exaggeration to say that whenever you do something to a car – let alone when something is done to it by another car – there's a fair chance a calibration will be called for. Here are some





common examples: Windshield replacement Rear view mirror replacement Any collision or air bag deployment Sensor module replacement Repairs to front or rear suspension or steering Changes in ride height Changes in tire size Wheel alignment Any repair that requires the removal and installation of an ADAS component Ideally, you would always access OE information detailing when a calibration should be done because it won't always be obvious by any means. (One convenient way to do this is investing in an ADAS alignment and calibration system; see below.) Becoming knowledgeable when calibrations are called for is another way to develop a reputation as a shop that “gets” ADAS. Alignment is everything. Every ADAS calibration begins with an alignment inspection. If the wheels aren't going entirely straight, neither will the ADAS. There can be no more “set the toe and let it go” alignments. ADAS accuracy depends on the vehicle's thrust line. That's how it was first calibrated at the factory, and doing so again will provide the best results. The geometric centerline and thrust line do not always coincide. Some rear suspensions are adjustable; others are not. If the rear is adjustable, the individual rear toe is adjusted to equal amounts, which will make

the lines the same, eliminating the thrust angle. If it's not, the best option is to adjust the front wheel geometry and ADAS to the thrust line. The most critical angle is the toe. Changes in rear individual toe cause the vehicle's thrust line to change, which affects front-wheel geometry, which in turn can affect the accuracy of the ADAS sensors. As a general rule, ADAS must be aligned to the vehicle's direction of travel. If the direction of travel, steering wheel direction and ADAS aiming do not coincide, the result can be poor ADAS performance or, in some cases, individual features can fail to function. This is why many manufacturers require aligning the systems electronically when making mechanical wheel alignment adjustments. Yet not all alignments are created equal. Some ADAS calibration procedures do not require the use of alignment equipment to determine the straight-ahead position of the front wheels. Instead, they rely on the technician to determine when the front wheels have equal individual toe values relative to the vehicle's thrust line. This is a difficult, if not impossible, task. All wheels must be measured, front and rear. Two-wheel alignments are a thing of the past. Take advantage of today's ADAS equipment. ADAS is not simple work. It's intricate, varied

and can easily lead to confusion. Techs can be forgiven for thinking they're stranded in no-man's land, staring at a pile of black-and-white checkerboards and wondering what to do with them. To become an expert, rely on experts. ADAS aftermarket alignment and calibration equipment that can eliminate a lot of the guesswork and carefully guide techs through a complete calibration for more than 25 million vehicles is now available. Full-diagnostic tools can integrate with the aligner, as well as combine with other ADAS fixtures to provide clear, step-by-step procedures to ensure the job is done correctly. Another option is partnering with services that can provide live, online calibration assistance. Given that ADAS specifications across dozens of brands change quite frequently, there is no reason not to take advantage of expert help whenever possible. There are a lot more than five things you need to know about ADAS, of course. Number six can be to develop an action plan, such as collecting readily available information, educating your team on identifying ADAS situations, and thoroughly training them on handling these opportunities. ADAS is designed for safety, and therefore safety must always be the prime consideration: that of your customers, and that of your business. ■

Claiming Excess WOTC Credits Against Payroll Tax Keeps Cash Flow Coming

Requiring employers to carry forward their WOTC credits to receive the financial benefit they have earned is unwise policy.



By Roy Littlefield IV

Many employers hit a situation where their certified WOTC credits are larger than their income tax liability. This is especially true for small businesses.

In the usual case, employers must carry forward the excess credits to the next tax year, or longer.

This income deferral reduces an employer's current cash flow, it's like a loan to the Federal government, and it can be harmful to business. Especially with wage/price pressures these days, it can jeopardize a company's ability to operate.

Legislation proposed by Chairman Wyden to enhance the Work Opportunity Tax Credit during the continuing COVID-19 emergency will contribute greatly to re-storing the health of our nation's workforce.

At the same time, new cost and supply-side challenges are sweeping the economy, especially the six percent consumer price rise, and even larger producer costs, since last year. Cost-growth is narrowing profit margins of employers, large and small, but especially harms firms which traditionally operate on low margins, like employers in retail, restaurant, hospitality, and many other sectors which use WOTC. While paying more for labor, competition limits their ability to raise prices.

Due to these challenges, we are now hearing from employers who are currently accumulating more WOTC credits than the amount of income tax liability available to receive the financial value of those credits. This causes employers to carry forward excess credits, delaying receipt of value and limiting much-needed cash flow to an uncertain future, which can be harmful to their business.

Requiring employers to carry forward their WOTC credits to receive the financial benefit they have earned is unwise policy. The cost to the government of the average WOTC worker, after wage deduction for amount of the credit, is \$1,900, while research has shown the government's benefit from WOTC is several times that amount of the credit from welfare savings alone. Asking an employer to defer \$1,900 a year for each worker hired under WOTC is like a loan to the Federal government; it produces a negative reaction among employers, especially small businesses, that can damage the WOTC program at a time when our goal is ten million new hires and growing workforce participation.

We therefore recommend that Congress modify current law, 26 USC 51(c), to authorize employers to claim certified WOTC credits against payroll tax when there's



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insufficient income tax liability to liquidate the credits, with the US Treasury reimbursing the Social Security Trust Funds.

WMDA/CAR being represented by SSDA-AT is a member of the Work Opportunity Tax Credit Coalition. This coalition seeks legislative action to increase the effectiveness of the Work Opportunity Tax Credit. WOTC provides business owners with an opportunity to earn tax credit up to \$9,600 per employee for hiring veterans and other qualified workers. Employers can earn a tax credit for each qualifying worker that ranges from \$1,200 (for qualifying young people hired to work during the summer) to as much as \$9,600 (for certain military veteran employees). ■

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Opposing Tax Hikes in the Build Back Better Bill



By Roy Littlefield III

WMDA/CAR calls on Congress and the Administration to end efforts to pass the multi-trillion-dollar tax increase included in the Build Back Better (BBB) bill and focus instead on the challenges confronting American families and businesses today – rising prices, labor shortages, and ongoing supply chain constraints.

Last month's Consumer Price Index report showing inflation rising at the fastest rate in forty years has our members understandably alarmed. Rapidly rising prices are a serious challenge to businesses of all sizes as they

make purchasing inventory, supplies, and inputs such as heat and electricity more expensive. In many cases, our members are unable to pass these higher costs on to their customers. Some customers are unable to pay higher prices, while others are locked into long-term contracts that preclude price changes.

These challenges are amplified by today's constrained labor markets. NFIB's member surveys rank the ongoing worker shortage as the number one challenge employers face. When businesses do find suitable workers, they often need to offer them higher wages to entice them to come to work. In ordinary times, this would be good for the workers, but as we have seen in recent months, inflation eats away at these nominal pay increases and real wages are actually down this year.

The Administration argues that the Build Back Better bill will help to reduce prices, but those arguments are simply not credible. Our members believe the primary causes of the reemergence of inflation are the Federal Reserve's continued easy money policies, massive amounts of deficit spending by Congress, and continued supply constraints, some tied to the Administration's economic and Covid policies.

Raising taxes on America's family businesses in this environment moves us in the wrong direction. Recent estimates show that more than \$500 billion of the Build Back Better's cost will be shouldered by family businesses and the bill would impose top rates on these businesses exceeding 50 percent. As with increased spending, voters believe these tax increases will be inflationary.

The Federal Reserve has recognized the challenge inflation poses to families and businesses and announced it will begin tapering its quantitative easing purchases in the coming months. Congress needs to make a similar adjustment, beginning by ending efforts to sharply increase federal spending while raising taxes on America's employers. ■



Rapidly rising prices are a serious challenge to businesses of all sizes as they make purchasing inventory, supplies, and inputs...

20 21

Year in Review



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3rd Annual Charity
GOLF
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Century Distributors, Inc.

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