

**Eric Blomgren**

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**From:** NJEMG Comms <Comms@njemg.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 26, 2026 12:21 PM  
**To:** Eric Blomgren  
**Subject:** Road Warrior: Safety Inspections, Tariff Refunds, Snow, AMT Notice



**February 26, 2026**

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### **Safety Inspections Get a Hearing in Trenton**

Last Thursday, NJEMG was happy to fly the flag in front of the Assembly Transportation Committee in the name of bringing back mandatory safety inspections. Last year, the Legislature approved a formal study, led by experts from the Rutgers Transportation Center and various state agencies, to come up with a plan toward changing transportation policies so that the state sees zero deaths from traffic incidents by 2040.

One of their official recommendations was that the State return to mandatory inspection of all light duty and passenger vehicles. We were happy to be one of the invited guests to testify to the Committee and strongly endorse this recommendation. We pointed out how you can talk to just about any technician or shop owner at a repair business in the state, and they will have stories of vehicles they cannot believe are still on the road. The most common topic is unsafe tires, including tires with virtually no tread or with literal metal spurs sticking out of them. [HERE](#) is a social media clip from just a few weeks ago from an NJ repair technician with a customer's car whose tire is literally being held together with duct tape.

It is also important to remember that vehicle safety is not just about the safety of the vehicle owner themselves, it is also about the safety of everyone else on the road—the person the unsafe car swerves into, or the motorist who isn't able to

brake in time because two of three brake lights were out on the car in front of them, as well as all the people who get stuck in the traffic that piles up after an accident. Inspections can identify dangerous conditions early, before they result in catastrophic failures or costly accidents.

Safety inspections were eliminated in 2010, allegedly as a maneuver to save money for the state budget in Gov. Christie's first term. In practice, Parsons had written the contract in such a way that the State saved only a fraction of what it had expected. Cars are staying on the road longer than ever, increasing the need for maintenance.

Some members of the Committee hadn't even realized that there were no safety elements checked for in the inspection process. One member of the Committee even wondered aloud why these inspections were ever eliminated. This speaks to another reason why we may have a real chance to bring back safety inspections. Only 10 of the 80 members of the General Assembly held office back in 2010 when inspections were eliminated. Legislation to do this has been introduced, sponsored by Asm. Joe Daniels (D-Somerset), the Chair of the Public Safety Committee, and Asm. Clinton Calabrese (D-Bergen), the Chair of the Transportation Committee.

The biggest obstacle we will have to this is the general public, who (as in the self-serve fight), may speak out against a policy they find "annoying." Legislators, however, LOVE anecdotes. If you have a repair shop and have any examples of unsafe cars that your customers won't get fixed, please email them to [Eric@njemg.com](mailto:Eric@njemg.com), pictures and/or video are a great help as well. If you would be interested in either testifying at a future Committee hearing and/or meeting virtually or in-person with legislators about the issue, please also email. Real world testimony from folks on the ground matters and strengthens our case.

You can read our full testimony [HERE](#).



## **Tariffs & Refunds**

Last Friday, the US Supreme Court came down with their long-awaited ruling about the constitutionality of President Trump's tariff-setting powers. In a 6-3 vote, they struck down most of the tariffs that the President had put in place over his first year in office, finding that Congress either had not or could not delegate to the President the power to set tax rates like this.

Not every one of the tariffs was being challenged in this case. Tariffs imposed on specific products like autos and steel under Section 232 were not ruled on by the Court one way or the other, only tariffs imposed under a law referred to as IEEPA, which had been applied on most products from countries. As expected, Trump responded by restoring tariffs under the authority of a different law (Section 122). This placed a flat 10% tariff on all other countries (with some items like oil and gasoline still exempted). He had stated that the rate would be 15%, but so far it has gone into effect at a 10% rate. However, under the law these

tariffs expire in 150 days. It is also questionable whether this set of tariffs is constitutional in the way it's being used, and could be frozen by the courts before that window expires.

As the Court made clear, it's not that the concept of tariffs is unconstitutional, it's that the taxation and lawmaking power is in the hands of the Congress. Congress could set tariffs at levels the President supports, but it appears there isn't enough support in Congress to make that happen—even though Republicans control both houses.

Since the IEEPA tariffs were ruled illegal, that means all the money paid to the government was illegally collected and should rightly be returned. The Administration admitted in court that losing the case meant they would have to refund the money they collected.

The process for this is so far very unclear, and the early indication is that the Administration is not interested in being helpful. Some politicians have suggested that the "refund" should be money mailed to everyone in the country at flat rates. Even if the government were to do that, it would not qualify as the actual refund, just another stimulus program. It appears that the money is owed to the specific business which paid it directly to the federal government. Once they have the money, it will be entirely up to them whether or not they want to return some or all of it to their customers.

That means unless you directly imported an item and paid the tariff to the government, it doesn't appear that you are *entitled* to any or all of the refund, even if it was explicitly passed on to you by your supplier. That does not mean, however, that you cannot *ask* to be refunded, perhaps as a payment or perhaps as a credit against future purchases.

It also means you may need to expect that at least some customers may try and seek some kind of refund or credit from your business.

This will be made more complicated by how long it might take for that money to even get back in anyone's hands. It may take months before any checks are going out.

If the government wanted to, it could proactively go through its records and send the money back, or create a simple process for businesses to fill out some forms, provide some receipts, and get the money back quickly. Early indications are that they do not want to make the process simple, and would rather keep as much of the \$130 billion as they can, though that could change as the situation develops.

Already some companies have filed suit looking to get their money back. At least 300,000 importers were subject to these tariffs while they were in effect. If the only way to get the refund is to file suit, that could scare off some smaller businesses for whom the legal costs would outweigh the refunded tax. 100,000+ different lawsuits would also slow the process down significantly.

The near immediate imposition of new tariffs also means you likely won't see much in the way of cheaper goods either, beyond the rollbacks on certain food items like coffee that the President canceled his tariffs on back in November.

We will be keeping an eye on the situation as it unfolds. For any more specific questions, reach out to [Eric@njemg.com](mailto:Eric@njemg.com)



## **A Few Post-Snowpocalypse Notes**

Congratulations! You've survived one of the biggest snowstorms in New Jersey history. Have you had enough for one season? State officials are still tallying up snowfall totals, but it's safe to say that there is plenty to clean up now that the storm is over.

What does that mean for your location? During the storm and the immediate aftermath, you and your employees were undoubtedly focused on clearing snow and properly salting the property. You were paying attention to safety concerns (your customers walking, how your employees were traversing the property, etc), and if you could continue to operate despite the weather (fuel deliveries, inventory drop-offs, etc)

Now that we are immediately danger is over, there is plenty to do as the weather warms and snow melts. And if you haven't done so already, now is the time to revisit proper maintenance and compliance practices after inclement weather.

If there is excessive rain or snow, there will eventually be a surge in runoff water that can harm your underground storage tanks. And with historical snowfall accumulations (as there was early this week) and the potential for "rapid" melting (as is anticipated), the immediate influx of melt-water runoff might create obstacles for your location. That's because sudden flooding can overwhelm local storm drains, and directly affect your storage tanks.

You've heard us state this previously, but water is the enemy of any UST system. When water inundates your location, there is potential to harm your business and your patrons' vehicles.

What is there to do?

For starters, you should make use of the state's compliance calendar and track your maintenance. If you don't have a copy of the compliance calendar, you can **CLICK [HERE](#)** to download it.

This maintenance might include water getting to your tanks through vent lines, faulty inlet fill caps, overflowing spill buckets, weak tank gasket seals and/or piping, rushed/poorly-executed tanker deliveries, broken floats, or even moisture seeping in from vent caps and vent balance pressure seals.

These are relatively simple steps that can save you plenty of headaches (both from DEP and your customers). Of course, that's only part of any post-storm

evaluation. What about Governor Sherrill's State of Emergency declaration and the possibility of breaking gouging laws?

In a State of Emergency (and sometimes without one), there are always patrons who will accuse a retailer or shop owner of “**price gouging**” consumers.

As you know, once a State of Emergency is declared, prohibitions against "gouging" automatically go into effect. These laws make it unlawful to sell merchandise at an "excessive" price increase (both during the State of Emergency or within 30 days of the declaration of the State of Emergency). An “excessive price increase” is defined as any price exceeding 10% of the price the product or service was sold for prior to the state of emergency (unless the wholesale cost increased more than 10%).

Remember, a State of Emergency does not prevent you from raising your price during an actual product shortage brought on by the emergency. You are permitted to pass along those price increases and maintain your profit margins; as long as those prices do not exceed 10% of the pre-State of Emergency pricing.

Most consumers don't really know what gouging is. Rather, they will see a high price and just report it to state officials.

While we often talk about the price of gas when it comes to gouging, remember that the law covers everything, including things like salt.

However, this time it's a little different and there should not be many accusations of wrongdoing. Why is that? Well, unlike other emergencies that might impact supply chains or production outputs, the most recent weather-related State of Emergency in New Jersey (and the larger area) is very localized.

Despite the size of the snowstorm, the production and transportation of fuel, food, and vital goods should not be heavily impacted. There is plenty of fuel and food inventory available. There is no shortage of salt, winter clothing, emergency supplies, or other necessary goods that are usually purchased (and perhaps, hoarded) during a snowstorm or weather-related emergency. Ultimately, that means there is smaller likelihood that a business owner will be reported for "gouging" the public.

Do you have any questions? If so, please reach out to us at 732-256-9646 or [Nick@njemg.com](mailto:Nick@njemg.com) at your convenience



### **Notice for all AMT Health Plan Participants**

If you use Association Member Trust (AMT) as your health insurance provider (for yourself or your employees), then you have or very soon will receive a letter and tax form from PKF O'Connor Davies with a Schedule K-1. This is to give to your accountant as part of the business's annual tax return.

The reason for the form is that in order to keep expenses as low as possible, AMT is organized as a non-profit trust. When it gives planholders a dividend, that dividend is technically taxable, in the way that interest from a savings account in a bank is taxable.

The cost of healthcare is skyrocketing all over the state, as we'll talk more about next week. Because AMT is not for profit, when we collect more in premiums than is paid for in coverage, we are able to return the "profit" to planholders in the form of a dividend. We have now been able to give all association AMT participants a 1% dividend in each of the last two years, showing up as a credit on your bill for February. That's over \$125,000 in two years in returned premiums.

AMT uses the Horizon BlueCross BlueShield network of health providers, and has optional add-ons for dental and vision coverage. You can request a quote online by clicking [HERE](#).



## Station for Sale

**Location:**

777 Hamburg Turnpike  
Pompton Lakes, NJ 07442

**Station features:**

- Corner location with four 6,000 gallon tanks (double wall fiberglass)
- Tanks were installed in 1998.
- 70,000 gallons of gasoline sales per month.
- Busy 2 Bay Garage, with small C-Store.

Interested in learning more?

**Contact Steve Hamparsumian with inquiries!**

Cell: 201-832-5885

Email: [Steveabbcnj@gmail.com](mailto:Steveabbcnj@gmail.com)



**Rack Averages**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Rack Avg</b>	<b>Avg w Taxes</b>	<b>Low Rack</b>
02/19	192.56	\$2.6006	184.62

02/20	191.83	\$2.5933	183.70
02/23	191.69	\$2.5919	184.03
02/24	190.04	\$2.5754	182.70
02/25	191.87	\$2.5937	184.80

Date	Avg Retail	Avg Margin	Diesel Rack Avg
02/19	\$2.96	0.37	277.74
02/20	\$2.95	0.35	274.62
02/23	\$2.94	0.35	282.66
02/24	\$2.94	0.35	282.73
02/25	\$2.94	0.37	280.00

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## News Worth Knowing:

[US slows sale of Lukoil assets to pressure Russia in Ukraine peace talks](#)

[Why prices won't drop after the Trump tariff ruling, according to economists](#)

[The \\$130 Billion Race for Companies to Get Their Tariff Money Back](#)

[Two-thirds of N.J. voters say Trump's tariffs led to higher prices](#)

[Guide to NJ property taxes details where the money goes, and how to get some back](#)

[New Jersey lawmakers got a 67% pay increase, but most have other jobs too](#)

[N.J. just announced a real-time 'red tape' tracker to see exactly where your permits are stuck](#)

[Supreme Court takes up climate case testing local lawsuits against oil companies](#)

[The Biggest New Fans of 401\(k\)s Are Small Businesses](#)

[Trump says America has witnessed a 'transformation' in State of the Union address](#)

[Established franchise owner acquires Mighty Auto Parts of Northern New Jersey](#)

[Energy Matters Episode 202 \[NJEMG interview beginning at 16:03\]](#)

[Asm. Onyema to introduce legislation barring 'surveillance pricing'](#)

[New York lawmakers seek rent control to protect small businesses](#)



**Member Benefit Partner (MBP) Spotlight: LSKO Environmental**

LISKO Environmental, LLC is a full-service environmental consulting firm focused on assisting New Jersey business owners and operators with environmental compliance. We offer a straightforward approach to site assessment and remediation. Our services include: LSRP Services • Regulatory and Mandatory Deadlines • Case Closure • UST Closure and Remediation • Preliminary Assessments, Remedial Investigations • Forensic Release Date Investigations, Expert Reports, Litigation Support • Phase I/Phase II Site Assessments/Environmental Due Diligence. If you've been dealing with an environmental problem for years and it seems like there is no end in sight, contact Jonathan Lisko today for a free consultation on your case.

**Contact:** Jonathan Lisko, LSRP 732-996-4792 [JLisko@liskoenv.com](mailto:JLisko@liskoenv.com)

**Website:** [www.liskoenv.com](http://www.liskoenv.com)



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