



Top Stories From the State, Nation and World

IN THE NEWS

Cheap Oil Helps Lower Average Gasoline Price

CAMARILLO, Calif. — The average price of gasoline in the United States has dropped nearly 4 cents a gallon at the pumps in the past two weeks, an industry analyst said.

Lower crude oil prices and increased production were behind the decline, analyst Tribby Lundberg said Sunday. "The retail price cut speeded up the past two weeks. Lower crude oil prices are the main cause, however, gasoline is also in greater supply," Lundberg said after examining results of Friday's Lundberg Survey of 10,000 gas stations. Gas prices nationwide, including all grades and taxes, averaged \$1.532 per gallon, which was down 3.89 cents from the \$1.5709 average on April 7. That was down 2.5 cents from the year's high of \$1.5958 on March 24.

"This is a much bigger drop than last time and further gas price cuts are more likely than not," Lundberg said, adding she was still cautious about predicting pump price drops.

The Camarillo-based Lundberg Survey showed the national average price of gasoline, including taxes, at self-serve pumps was \$1.4835 for regular, \$1.5805 for mid-grade and \$1.6643 for premium.

Bad Weather Creates Delay in Shuttle Launch

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — Dangerously high wind forced NASA

to call off space shuttle Atlantis' launch Monday on a mission to repair the international space station.

The space agency tentatively aimed for a Tuesday afternoon liftoff, even though it is supposed to be windier.

NASA flight rules say that the crosswinds can be no higher than 17 mph, in case the spacecraft has to make an emergency return to the launch site. With only nine minutes left in Monday's countdown, the wind was gusting to 23 mph and NASA called off the launch.

"We'll get 'em next time," shuttle commander James Halsell Jr. said.

Atlantis is loaded with more than a ton of supplies and replacement parts for the space station, which has been orbiting virtually empty for the past 1 1/2 years.

The most important items are four new batteries. Since astronauts last visited the space station last spring, two of the six batteries failed and another two are showing signs of deterioration.

In addition, an antenna is broken, a

crane is loose and the space station is dropping nearly two miles in orbit each week because of increased solar activity.

NASA wants Atlantis and its crew of seven up there as soon as possible to fix all the problems.

NASA has only five minutes each afternoon to launch Atlantis. The launch window is shorter than usual in order for the shuttle to use the least amount of fuel to reach the space station.

Atlantis was not supposed to fly until the Russians had launched their critical service module. But with the service module more than two years behind schedule and due to fly no earlier than July, NASA moved up Atlantis' repair mission.

The Russian delays — and the Florida weather — aren't the only things that

have kept Atlantis grounded. Halsell twisted an ankle during training last month, forcing a one-week delay.

Arrest Warrants Issued For LAPD Corruption

LOS ANGELES — Arrest warrants were issued for three police officers Monday in the first criminal charges to arise from the Los Angeles Police Department's corruption scandal.

Sgt. Edward Ortiz and Brian Liddy and Officer Paul Harper were expected to surrender at a police station, said Geoffrey Garfield, a spokesman for the Police Protective League.

The Los Angeles Times, citing confidential sources, reported that the three were being charged for allegedly fram-

ing a suspected gang member on a weapons charge in April 1996. They must be charged by Wednesday, when the statute of limitations expires.

At least 30 LAPD officers, including three sergeants, have been relieved of duty in the wake of the corruption scandal. It began last year when an officer convicted of stealing cocaine from an evidence locker told investigators of cases in which officers with the Rampart station near downtown framed, beat and shot innocent people.

Police Chief Bernard Parks has criticized prosecutors for moving too slowly to charge corrupt officers named in the investigation. District Attorney Gil Garcetti has said he moved slowly to build stronger cases against the officers.

Ortiz, 43, Liddy, 38, and Harper, 33,

will likely face charges of perjury, falsifying an arrest report and conspiracy for allegedly planting a gun on a man during a raid at a party thrown by the 18th Street gang, the Times reported.

The suspect, Allan Lobos, told investigators that "Liddy told him that he was going to jail for the gun and rubbed it up against Lobos' fingers" to mark them with fingerprints, court documents said.

Lobos pleaded guilty to being a felon in possession of a gun and was sentenced to a year in jail and three years probation. His conviction was among the 67 overturned since the investigation began, but he remains in prison on a murder conviction.

Attempts to reach the three officers Monday were unsuccessful.

Associated Press

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