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**CORRECTION TO THIS ARTICLE**

An earlier version of this article on fuel surcharges gave an incorrect title for Jack Gillis at the Consumer Federation of America. He is the director of public affairs.

## Consumer Pain Goes Beyond The Pump

Gas Fees Added in Several Industries

By Ylan Q. Mui  
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Two dollars for pizza delivery.

An extra \$1.70 to ship a \$20 package.

And a \$10 surcharge for lawn-mowing service.

The rising cost of fuel is rippling far beyond what consumers pay at the pump. Companies across an array of industries are instituting fuel surcharges that are nibbling away at consumers' pocketbooks. Like the airline industry with its baggage fees, businesses say they are being squeezed by higher gas prices and must pass on the costs to survive.

"We're going to be paying higher costs across the board whether you pay it in the form of a surcharge or you pay it in the form of higher prices," said Noreen Perrotta, finance editor at [Consumer Reports](#), who recently paid an extra \$10 to have her lawn mowed. "We'd better get used to it, and we better start budgeting for it."

Soaring gas prices are pushing Americans to shop for bargains, change their driving patterns and vacation at home. But less attention has been paid to the impact of the many small and often indirect ways that consumers are paying for gas, and generally, there are no regulations governing how fuel surcharges are calculated or implemented.

"It's almost impossible to tell if they're fair," said Jack Gillis, executive director of the [Consumer Federation of America](#), an advocacy group. "It makes it very difficult for consumers to comparison-shop and understand the full price of the products that they're buying."

An investigation by the Florida attorney general's office this year resulted in cruise operators Carnival and [Royal Caribbean](#) agreeing to refund a total of \$61 million to customers who were billed for fuel surcharges after booking their trips. After several calls to his office, Pennsylvania Attorney General [Tom Corbett](#) issued an advisory last month urging consumers to be on the lookout for undisclosed fuel surcharges. Consumer protection agencies in Maryland and Virginia said they had not received similar calls.

"The total price of a product or service is a key factor in any purchase and is something that needs to be disclosed to consumers upfront," Corbett said. "Any business intending to collect an added fee for fuel or energy must disclose those charges when they advertise their prices."

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Grocery delivery service Peapod normally charges \$6.95 to \$9.95 for delivery, depending on the size of the order. About seven months ago, it added a fuel surcharge tied to the average price of gas in certain states. An online chart outlines costs up to \$1.48 for a fuel price of \$4.05 per gallon. But with gas averaging \$4.079 yesterday, the current surcharge of \$1.58 is literally off the charts.

"We did everything we could to save the customers," spokeswoman Elana Margolis said. "There was no way around. We waited for a really long time."

UPS and [FedEx](#) calculate their fuel surcharges for ground shipping monthly based on the [Energy Department's](#) average highway diesel price. Both are adding 8.5 percent of the cost of shipping the package to the final price through July 6, when the fee increases to 9.5 percent. And the [U.S. Postal Service](#) raised the price of letter stamps by a penny to, 42 cents, last month, along with other rates, as rising fuel costs contribute to the agency's money drain.

Among the big three pizza chains, free delivery used to be a mantra. But now [Pizza Hut](#), [Domino's](#) and [Papa John's](#) are all charging to bring the pie to your pad.

Most of Domino's locations began tacking on delivery fees as far back as 2003 to compensate for a variety of rising costs, including fuel, according to company spokesman Tim McIntyre. The amount varies by region, and many have instituted sliding scales that rise and fall with gas prices.

Papa John's franchisee Andy Freitas, who owns 51 locations in the region, started adding a \$2 delivery fee to orders about two years ago as gas prices started to creep up. But although the money helps pay drivers' salaries and reimburse some of their mileage, some customers think the fee replaces their tip. Not so, Freitas implored.

"They are tipped employees," he said, watching the last of the lunch rush leave a Papa John's in Arlington on a recent afternoon. "They've got to break even getting to your door."

A representative for Pizza Hut declined to comment for this article, but a reporter was charged \$1.85 for delivery of a \$12.99 pan crust Ultimate Meat Grill last week.

Donna OjjeH got four large pizzas and three orders of buffalo wings from Pizza Hut delivered to her Oakton home for her 16-year-old son and eight of his friends last week. She remembered paying a small delivery fee but said she felt sorry for the guy who brought it to them. She tipped him \$10.

"I was just going, 'Man, I don't want to lose him,' " she said.

OjjeH knows about pain at the pump as proprietor of Maids of Fairfax. In August 2005, her monthly gas bill for her 18 cleaning crews was \$2,500. Last month, it was \$4,700. OjjeH said that she was trying to consolidate the crews' trips to save money but that she hadn't added a fuel surcharge.

"I just feel terrible to try to pass that increase on to my customers," she said, fearing it would only irritate them.

But consumers are not the only ones paying surcharges. Companies say their suppliers are tacking on the fees as well.

In addition to watching his fuel bill double over the past year, Mark Crooks, a manager with heating and plumbing company John C. Flood in [Montgomery County](#), said the costs of receiving shipments of parts

and tools had also grown. Meanwhile, the price of metals had driven up the cost of his materials.

"It's not just the gasoline," Crooks said. "We're feeling it in every part of our business."

Crooks said the company has considered giving drivers GPS units and other measures to make them more fuel efficient. It is also debating whether to institute a fuel surcharge: How would customers react? Would they simply prefer a higher price altogether? What would that do to their promise of free estimates?

"We know everybody else is hurting, too," Crooks said. "We try to hold the line as small as we can profitably. We just have to make a decision."

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