

Keith finds no major problems in fuel samples

Auditors still want authority to conduct regular tests

Tests on fuel samples from area gas stations by County Auditor Karl Keith indicated no major problems in terms of quality. But Keith says he still believes counties should be permitted to test octane levels and water and sediment contamination in motor fuel to protect consumers.

At Keith's request, weights and measures inspectors from Summit County, Ohio spent two days in the area demonstrating the techniques and equipment they use to conduct fuel quality tests. Working with Keith and his staff the inspectors drew gasoline and diesel fuel samples from six service stations in Dayton, Harrison Township, Miamisburg and West Carrollton.

According to Keith, all the octane levels from the samples exceeded the posted levels on the gas pumps. However, he said water and sediment contamination was discovered in some of the samples, but the contamination was within acceptable industry standards.

"This was just a very small sample," Keith said, "and even though we found no major problems there would be no way of knowing that without testing."

"With gas prices rising over three dollars a gallon, we need to be sure consumers are getting gas that meets quality standards." He added, "The new law signed by Gov. Taft last week encouraging the use of ethanol in Ohio makes a testing program even more critical. Consumers need to be confident they are getting E-85, not E-50."

Because Summit is a charter county it is the only jurisdiction in the state authorized to conduct fuel quality tests. Ohio remains one of only four states without a statewide program.

Keith, who serves as president of the Southwest Auditors Association, said he and his fellow auditors have lobbied state legislators for years for the authority to test fuel quality. He expects legislation permitting local weights and measures inspectors to conduct these tests will be introduced during this session of the General Assembly.

"This has been a legislative priority for county auditors for some time," Keith said. "We are optimistic that a bill will soon be considered that will provide consumers with this added protection at the gas pump. This protection is long overdue."