

URCO publishes fuel quality standards to strengthen consumer protection

Greater confidence in the fuel we buy

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Consumers across the Cayman Islands are set to benefit from clearer information and stronger safeguards for the fuel they buy, following today's publication of the Fuel Quality Standards 2027 by the Utility Regulation and Competition Office (URCO). The Standards will take effect on 1 January 2027 and cover products including gasoline, diesel and propane and setting the stage for ease of incorporation of greener renewable fuels going forward.

The publication marks a significant step forward in consumer protection, bringing rules on fuel quality, testing, labelling and action when products fall short together in a national framework for the fuels covered. It gives consumers clearer expectations of what they are buying and provides a firmer basis for holding suppliers accountable for its quality.

Sonji Myles, Chief Executive Officer of URCO, said:

"Whether you are filling your car, buying propane for cooking or purchasing diesel to run equipment, you should be able to trust what you are buying. Fuel should meet the quality and grade it is sold as, and there should be clear ways to check that it does.

"These Standards turn that expectation into practical protections. They set out what suppliers must deliver, how fuel quality can be checked and what must happen when a product does not meet the required standard. That is the consumer protection at the heart of this work."

What this means for consumers

From 1 January 2027, the Standards will provide:

Clearer information at the pump: Labels must accurately identify the fuel, its grade and applicable rating, helping customers understand what they are buying. Gasoline must meet at least the octane rating displayed. This gives consumers a clear assurance: fuel must not be sold as a higher grade than it actually meets.

Safeguards against contamination: Rules on water in storage tanks, fuel-pump filters and clearly marked filling points will help protect fuel quality during storage and dispensing.

Quality that can be checked: Recognised tests supported by law will provide a consistent way to check whether fuel meets the required standard, rather than relying on product descriptions alone.

Action when fuel falls short: Sale of fuel can be stopped where fuel does not meet the requirements, with controlled arrangements for correcting the problem or dealing with the affected fuel. Where a stop-sale order is issued at a terminal or bulk facility, the operator must immediately notify all customers who received the affected product and arrange to replace it or bring it up to the required standard.

Working together to protect consumers

URCO acknowledges the Fuel Standards Committee's contribution to developing and approving the Standards. The Committee is chaired by the Chief Fuels Inspector and includes appointees from the Department of Environmental Health, the Department of the Environment and the Water Authority.

Their combined expertise in fuels, environmental health, the environment and water protection helped shape the Standards for the Cayman Islands. The work draws on recognised international fuel specifications and testing methods.

Preparing for the new requirements

The Standards apply across Grand Cayman, Cayman Brac and Little Cayman and also support environmental protection through limits on substances such as sulphur. Made under the Dangerous Substances Act, they give fuel importers and operators advance notice of the requirements so they can prepare for compliance from 1 January 2027.

While the Standards set requirements for fuel products currently imported and used locally, they also establish a framework that can be reviewed and updated to accommodate alternative fuels as the country's needs change. This provides a practical basis for regulating greener and renewable fuels as they are introduced, supporting the transition away from diesel dependence while maintaining clear quality requirements and consumer protections.

The goal is straightforward: clearer information, fuel quality that can be checked, and accountability when standards are not met. Together, these measures provide a stronger foundation for consumer confidence in the fuel supplied in the Cayman Islands.

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