

ON THE ROAD



MARCH 2009
VOLUME I ISSUE 7

THE OFFICIAL COMMUNICATION OF THE NEW JERSEY GASOLINE C-STORE AUTOMOTIVE ASSOCIATION

THE NORTHEAST 2009 TRADESHOW EDITION!



MARCH 20-22 2009
AT THE MEADOWLANDS EXPOSITION CENTER
MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

INSIDE:

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FUNDING OUR PAC: THE IMPORTANCE OF LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES

By Christopher Stark

“Just Follow the Money!”

It’s what each of us are taught when searching for the answers to many of today’s most complex decisions: “Just Follow the Money!”

However, there is more to this saying than meets the eye. When we follow the money in New Jersey it always leads to Trenton: the Governor’s Office, Legislative

Offices, and even to other organizations like ours. Money itself is a powerful tool, but do not be mistaken by the idea that decisions are made simply because of the Money.

Several legislators have laughed with me at the idea that votes and sponsorship of legislation are bought with a couple hundred dollars—and they are RIGHT. Our organization needs you to support our Political Action Committee with a donation of \$50, \$100, \$200, or as much as possible; because there is more to money than meets the eye.

Without even seeing your face as you read this I am certain that many of you think that I am crazy. What more is there to lobbying than providing the money?! Well the answer is quite simple—the knowledge that there are a lot of people behind the money. In a state like New Jersey, the money looks good to a legislator, but what really drives them is the idea that the money came from their own constituents who could use the money to fund opponents if the legislator doesn’t do his or her duty in representing the district.

Several months ago we made a major statement in Trenton, when our organization led the fight that ended with Below Cost Selling being pulled from a floor vote in the Assembly. Now we must continue on in this upward path in Trenton. People understand our team, they know that there are people behind us, they trust our word, but there is something missing—The MONEY that proves just how strong we are. Think of this entire scenario as if it is a country. We are YOUR army, but without a strong economy our ability to defend you is weakened.

Donate to the NJGCA PAC and allow your army in Trenton to work to its fullest potential. Please call me today at 973-376-0066 and pledge your support to our legislative initiatives in Trenton.

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QUOTE FOR THOUGHT

A successful man is one who can lay a firm foundation with the bricks others have thrown at him - David Brinkley

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MESSAGE FROM NJGCA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SAL RISALVATO

TRADESHOW EXCITEMENT!



It is a little over two years since I joined NJGCA as Executive Director. In these past two years I have tried to steer us in directions that previously were ignored. I admit that sometimes I wonder if the directions that I have chosen to head are the right ones. I wonder if members appreciate or receive a benefit from the new things I have put in place.

NJGCA members were not accustomed to as much activity or communications coming from headquarters. Of course, those of you who still refuse to use email haven't experienced the

increase in information and communication, but I still hold out hope that eventually you will see the importance of using a computer.

NJGCA is now stepping into a new zone. For more than a year I have been exploring how our association can have our own trade show. I traveled to other states to participate in other shows and learn how it is done. Many times I was accompanied by NJGCA Board members and staff.

What did I learn? I learned that undertaking a trade show and informational conference is an extremely huge undertaking. However, I also learned that there are advantages and benefits to the members I serve that are just as huge! Of course my vision for such an undertaking is more ambitious than prudent efforts will allow. But vision is aimed for the future, and I can accept the concept of walking before running.

With the support of the Board of Directors, and as a result of building a relationship with our brethren in AASP/NJ, I have steered us to be a "Featured Participant" in the annual Northeast 2009 Automotive Trade Show. Many of you are familiar with this show since AASP/NJ has been doing this show for over 20 years, and you may have attended at times.

What does the Northeast 2009 Tradeshow mean to NJGCA as an organization? How does the Northeast 2009 Tradeshow benefit NJGCA members?

These two questions weighed heavy when considering whether to involve NJGCA in the first trade show of this magnitude that this organization has ever attempted.

First I would like to address the importance this show has to NJGCA as an organization. Few state organizations have the ability or spirit to undertake an effort like this for their members. I am choosing for NJGCA to be a leader and excel beyond what other state organizations do for their members. WMDA, our counterpart representing gasoline service stations in Maryland and Delaware, has been doing an excellent show for many years. This is one of the shows we attended to gain some knowledge. Anytime an organization undertakes a project that is beneficial to its members, it is performing the

fundamental purpose it is challenged to do.....Serve the Members!

How do NJGCA members benefit? First you have to participate. Benefit can not be derived unless you attend the show. I have targeted 3 levels of benefit for NJGCA members.

Naturally I want members to meet vendors that can provide products and services that they are either currently using, or may consider using. Vendors that attend shows such as this display the newest products and technologies. Vendors often make special deals at trade shows that will benefit attendees economically too. Meeting vendors increases your awareness of what is being offered to competitors, and will keep you up to date.

Next I have planned a few programs of interest. Knowledge is important in today's world of operating any small business. Yes, I send out as much information as possible, but sometimes a hands-on seminar can brand important topics in to your brain better than my weekly Road Warrior emails. We have several programs of importance that you can attend.

All small businesses must now comply with a complex and burdensome new law called "The Family and Medical Leave Act" Friday night we will hold a seminar that will give you valuable information about how to comply with this new law. Proper compliance will help you avoid costly fines and more costly lawsuits.

Since I am determined to blaze a path for those of you who wish to be industry leaders and take advantage of opportunities on the ground floor, I have asked experts to do a seminar on several up and coming alternate fuel technologies and outline how you can consider these additions to your present fuel sales. This should prove to be very interesting.

My next objective is to have an event that can build some camaraderie and collegiality among NJGCA members. I have asked the staff here to put together some fun activities that would make a nice family event. I am hoping you will all bring your spouses and children, and ask your employees and their families to attend. This is an excellent opportunity to attend the show and spend time that you don't get enough of with your family. Sunday afternoon is our "Family Fun Day".

Like an infant learning to walk, we have begun what hopefully will become an annual event. Do I expect to expand and improve our effort in future years? You bet I do. I want this to become a new tradition that NJGCA members will mark on their calendars every year.

I want this to be a success for you! In order for this show to be a success, I need you to attend and participate. I will look for your opinions and feedback once we have completed the show. I am enthusiastically asking you to please attend and bring others. Please be a part at the beginning of a new successful NJGCA tradition!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sal Risalvato". The signature is fluid and cursive, written on a white background.



ISSUE UPDATES

Please see the updates below for the most recent activity in Trenton and around the state. These issues are important to all NJGCA Members!

By Christopher Stark



[First Right of Refusal](#)

NJGCA is experiencing early success with S-2553 and A-3726, which are the Senate and Assembly versions of the bill. Senators Cardinale and Sarlo are sponsoring the legislation in the Senate, with Assemblymen Diegnan, Chivukula, and Bramnick sponsoring it in the Assembly. We need to pass this legislation quickly so we need your outreach NOW. Call your Assemblymen and Senators, even if you are not directly affected by this legislation. Ask them to support First Right of Refusal. This is a golden opportunity for retailers to finally get the chance to own the property they have been renting. Exxon and Shell are both looking to divest, and it is likely that this trend will continue as all the big oil companies exit the marketing segment of the business. Do NOT take a chance and remain idle in this debate. For those that can't afford to purchase their locations, there are several protections in this bill that pertain to you. All Lessee Dealers should take part in this legislation. Please call the office immediately and talk to Chris.



[Right to Repair](#)

Every automotive repair facility is facing increased difficulty obtaining computer codes and technical information from car manufacturers. Right to Repair has already passed the Assembly and now resides in the Senate Commerce Committee, where it is awaiting a hearing. We are confident that the hearing will take place in the next few months and brought to the floor for a vote of the full Senate. It is imperative that letters and calls go out to Senator Nia Gill, urging her to put Right to Repair up in her committee for a vote as soon as possible. If we are not successful passing Right to Repair before the end of the year, we will have to begin the process again next January when the new Legislature convenes. There has been too much progress on this legislation to allow this to happen. We need your help in passing this legislation before June. Contact the office or our website www.njgca.org for more information.



[Zone Pricing](#)

NJGCA wants to thank all the members who have been diligent in sending in their prices over the last several months. The result of your work prompted a major story on zone pricing by a network news station, and more importantly by Bloomberg news. Bloomberg news has distributed this story to several papers throughout the state and consequently increased the

knowledge of Zone Pricing. Legislators and motorists are angry that wholesale prices for the same brand can vary by as much as 20 cents a gallon. Retailers are struggling to compete and we have several legislators that have sponsored and introduced legislation that will end this practice.

This legislation has been introduced in the legislature for many years, but until recently has been unable to get any attention. NJGCA efforts to survey and record price information from members, has provided the evidence needed to demonstrate the importance of banning Zone Pricing.



[Below Cost Selling](#)

The hemorrhoid of all legislation is Below Cost Selling. While we had a great achievement by stopping this legislation from the floor vote in the Assembly, it is NOT dead. The dangers of allowing below cost selling are clear: if selling gasoline below cost is permitted, big box retailers and large distributors will be able to put you out of business. Small retailers can't compete with large chains and will be forced to close. You MUST remain vigilant. Only a show of solidarity from the troops prevented this legislation from passing. You will be needed again. Unfortunately, much like a hemorrhoid, all we can do is treat the legislation; then wait for the next time it rears itself. NJGCA is monitoring this legislation and will work hard to ensure that this legislation never reaches the governor's desk.



[Anti-Rate Stabilization Bill/Coalition](#)



NJGCA has been working with the Anti-Rate Stabilization Coalition to fight Senate Bill 2428, which will result in a formula rate system for utility charges that could dramatically increase the rate you pay for electricity and natural gas.. Currently rates are based on usage and approved by the BPU, however this legislation will create a formula to guarantee a rate of return to the utilities. Utility rates have already increased by 50 percent in recent years, and it is unknown exactly how much more you will be charged through this legislation, but we are certain it will be more than the current system allows. The monopolies across our state that manage the utilities are trying to fast track rate increases, and are offering legislators all sorts of empty promises for job creation. However, this bill is nothing more than a license to charge businesses and residents of New Jersey more, even as they consume less energy. Utilities want this guaranteed formula to be approved before they invest in any energy saving projects. Utilities believe that less consumption will cause fewer profits. If New Jersey as a whole reduced energy consumption by 50%, the utilities would be able to increase rates by 50% in order to earn the guaranteed profit provided for in their

plans. NJGCA believes that the energy users coalition has stalled the bill, but will remain watchful as it is not dead.

Minimum Mark-up on Cigarettes

Assemblyman Chivukula, who has been a great friend of our organization, has introduced legislation that will increase the minimum markup on cigarettes by 7%. This legislation has not moved since its introduction date, but we need those of you who sell cigarettes to call into your legislators and let them know that a minimum mark-up on cigarettes is good for business and helps keep many businesses that make little on gasoline afloat and able to keep gasoline competition in an area.

License Site Professional Bill

There are several areas of this legislation that are of great concern to NJGCA members. First, the definition for small business, specifically in terms of the funding mechanisms for environmental remediation, includes all of our members, most of whom are considered the epitome of small business. Secondly, many of you are not going to be capable of providing either the requirement for full-funding or the surcharge on non-permanent remedies as solutions during remediation. In terms of the site-remediation funding, any action on this bill as it stands could place an unnecessary burden on the underground storage tank insurance industry, which could severely backfire on the environmental protections sought through S-1897. The effects of the full-funding mandate in this bill will be disastrous for both the regulators and the real small businesses in charge of maintaining a clean environment. The entire purpose of the legislation was to streamline the process for remediation, instead we re-invented the wheel. Finally, this bill provides no minimum requirement for the DEP officials who will be reviewing environmental documents. It is important to ensure that those individuals giving the final approval on a site remediation project have at least the same breadth and depth of knowledge as those conducting the work. While this is perhaps one of the densest and hardest pieces of

legislation to understand, we need you to work with us to understand just how S-1897 will impact your business and your ability to provide a clean environment at your station. If you are confused about this legislation or have any questions, please call Chris at the office immediately.

The Employee "Free Choice" Act

Nearly two years ago, NJGCA warned about the Employee "Free Choice" Act, which will allow greater control by unions over your business and the nation's economy. The legislation died in Congress from 2006-2008, because former President Bush refused to sign the legislation. Unions are pushing hard for this legislation, and President Obama has promised to sign it in to law. The Employee Free Choice Act will give unions unprecedented ability to enter your gas station, convenience store, and auto repair shop to organize your employees and join the union. Workers will be vulnerable to misinformation, intimidation, and coercion by union advocates, while employers will struggle with new union mandates.

- It removes the provisions for a secret ballot
- Allows union bosses to intimidate workers into signing cards
- Provides that a union is formed if a simple majority of workers sign the cards

Send a letter to the Editor of your local newspaper in opposition of the "Free Choice" Let your friends, neighbors and elected officials know where you stand. Please call the offices of your Congressman and Senators Menendez and Lautenberg. The provisions of this law will eliminate the long-protected and democratic principle of private-ballot elections, and work against all employers. Employers will virtually become helpless and will be forced to submit to the demands of unions such as the Teamsters and AFL-CIO. More information will follow as it becomes available.



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PROPERTY DESCRIPTION: A corner service station; has been owned and operated by the same proprietor since 1956. The owner is retiring and seeks interested parties. The station has two bays with lifts and an office. Currently the station performs full service automotive repairs and tire sales. Gas pumps and tanks were completely upgraded to EPA guidelines in 1994, including double-wall fiberglass tanks and lines. Property also includes a 3-family, fully rented apartment building. A two-car garage and a three-car garage are also included on the property; either can be used for additional storage or rental. All buildings and garages will be included in the sale. The station is a corner lot located at the intersection of 16th Street & Grove Street in Irvington, conveniently situated one block up from Garden State Parkway Exit 144.

For more information, and to see the property, please contact Emily Bielen at 732-388-9291
Interested in placing a classified ad? Contact NJGCA at 973-376-0066 for more information!!



HYDROGEN: FUELING THE FUTURE

By Calisto Bertin, PE



Hydrogen stores an immense amount of energy. In a gaseous state, it can be used for combustion. But when processed through a fuel cell, hydrogen generates electricity that can power an electric motor to propel a vehicle.

The benefits of a hydrogen fueled vehicle are enormous. In today's environmentally conscious society, it should be noted that a hydrogen vehicle generates zero pollution. Hydrogen fueled vehicles produce water vapor only. Onboard fuel tanks are capable of storing enough hydrogen to enable the vehicle to travel as much as 300 miles before refueling. This range is substantially better than the 40-mile range available from a battery powered car. Because there are fewer moving parts than an internal combustion engine, maintenance is much easier, less frequent, and less costly.

Congress enacted legislation that was signed by President Bush in 2005, with the goal to make hydrogen fuel-cell vehicles cost effective by 2020. The United States government has dedicated more than \$1 billion toward fuel cell research and development. Automobile manufacturers such as General Motors, Honda and Toyota have been developing fuel cell vehicles, while energy companies such as Shell Hydrogen and British Petroleum have been working on the filling station infrastructure.

There are only a few hydrogen fueling stations in the northeast, and New Jersey has great potential to be part of a corridor of hydrogen filling stations from Washington D.C. all the way through New England.

There are different types of hydrogen filling stations. Some stations generate hydrogen at the location, and then dispense it in to the vehicles. Other filling stations receive tanker truck deliveries and store the hydrogen fuel similar to gasoline service stations. The most recent hydrogen station was built by Shell Hydrogen at the DPW yard in White Plains. In that location, the New York Power Authority participated by supplying "clean" hydro-electricity to produce the gaseous hydrogen. There are two more stations under construction in New York City that will be supplied by trailer deliveries. In California, some stations receive hydrogen deliveries by a direct pipeline from a distant refinery.

There are no stations yet planned in New Jersey. Business owners that already sell gasoline and diesel should consider how they can be on the cutting edge of this next phase of fueling their customer's cars. Retailers that have access to large government or commercial fleets are prime candidates to add hydrogen fuel capabilities at their locations. Future programs are likely to rely on government funding from programs designed to promote renewable energy and reduce pollutants..

Hydrogen technology is in the early stages of development, and there are still challenges to overcome. As with any alternate energy, it must be cost effective for motorists to drive hydrogen fueled vehicles. It must be cost effective to purchase these vehicles, and the fuel must be cost effective when compared to petroleum based fuels. There must also be relative convenience to purchase hydrogen or any alternate energy.

Business owners must have customers to purchase hydrogen before they will consider installing expensive equipment at their facilities to store and dispense it. There must be enough profit to encourage and motivate retailers to risk the capital necessary to build hydrogen fueling stations.

So which comes first, the chicken or the egg? Which comes first, vehicles that will operate on hydrogen fuel, or hydrogen filling stations?

Recent price increases and continued volatility in petroleum markets are beginning to bring government, consumers, and business closer together to overcome the "chicken and egg" problem.

Calisto Bertin is president of Bertin Engineering, located in Glen Rock, New Jersey. His firm has been hired by Shell Hydrogen to design hydrogen filling stations in the northeast.



NJGCA MEMEBER BENEFIT PARTNERS!

NJGCA has recently we have revamped our Member Benefit Partners (MBPs) program to better serve your small business. Most MBPs offer discounts and special programs exclusively for NJGCA members ONLY – You cannot get these negotiated arrangements anywhere else!!

Here is a list of our current MBPs:

Tek Collect - Debt collection
NCS LLC - Credit improvement
EXTEL Communications - Improved communications offerings
Firesigns1075 - Digital sign provider
First Capital Mortgage - Commercial & Residential loans
MYnjOffice - Office supplies (paper, forms, ink cartridges)
Merchants Advocate & Simplêfy Inc. - Credit Card Processing & Consulting
Environmental Alliance - Environmental remediation services
American Equipment Finance - Gas Station & C-Store Equip. & Acquisition
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NJGCA is looking for people with experience to join our team of Territory Managers who work in the field visiting **NJGCA** members. Several territories are available. **NJGCA** has always tried to employ previous members whenever possible. Even if you are not available now, let us know if you are interested and we will keep you in mind for the future.

Contact Phil Apruzzi at
phil@njgca.org

Contact your Territory Manager or call our office to take advantage of these benefits and services!!

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SATURDAY, MARCH 21, 2009: 10AM – 5PM

SUNDAY, MARCH 22, 2009: 10AM – 3PM

BE THERE!



SPECIAL TRADESHOW SECTION



**YOU CAN'T AFFORD
TO MISS THIS!!**

NJGCA has teamed up with AASP/NJ to participate in the **NORTHEAST 2009 TRADESHOW** to be held March 20-22 2009 at the Meadowlands Expo Center!

NORTHEAST is an event tailored to fit the needs of professionals in the gasoline retail, convenience store, and automotive repair industries.

Over 400 vendors and exhibitors will be present, demonstrating the latest merchandise and services for your small business!

And with over 10,000 retailers from the Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, and Metropolitan areas in attendance, this promises to be an excellent opportunity to learn about the latest products and services.

No matter if you are an experienced small business owner or new to the industry, our goal is to bring you the very best the industry has to offer.

Get a glimpse of coming trends. Find information on the latest professional services. Browse through some of the newest products and equipment. We bring it all to you!

These merchants will bring you the latest products and services to improve your business before your competition has even learned of them!

NORTHEAST will also bring you insightful seminars, product demonstrations, a unique shopping experience, and unlimited networking opportunities!

You can't miss this show!

FURTHER INFORMATION

The **Meadowlands Exposition Center** is located at:

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Phone: (201) 330-7773

NJGCA NORTHEAST 2009 Homepage: www.njgca.org/html/Tradeshow

AASP/NJ NORTHEAST 2009 Homepage: <http://aaspnjnortheast.com/>



SPECIAL TRADESHOW SECTION



ITINERARY & DETAILS

EVENT ITINERARY

Paid Family Leave Seminar – Friday, March 20, 2009:

Last year the Paid Family Leave Act was passed and signed into law by Governor Corzine. This legislation has enormous implications for your small business. Do you fully understand how this law will affect your establishment? Join the Employer's Association of New Jersey and Team NJGCA for this informative seminar. Hear right from the authorities on how these state-mandated Paid Family Leave Laws will impact you and what it means for your employees!

Alternative Energy Seminar – Saturday, March 21, 2009:

The service station industry is changing and the green-revolution will impact the gasoline market. New technologies such as hydrogen and ethanol will change the industry in the next decade. What should you expect as they are adopted and how will it affect your business? Hear from industry experts in the energy infrastructure and alternative fuels fields, with valuable insight on where the industry is going and why!

Family Fun Day! – Sunday, March 22, 2009:

As a small business owner, your family contributes greatly to your success. We will recognize their dedication by hosting a **Family Fun Day!** Bring your spouses, children, grandchildren - or even your employees and their children - for an exciting afternoon of food, amusements, and activities!! There will be games for kids of all ages, from art projects for the tiny tikes to cards for the more mature around us! Food will be provided complimentary to those who come with a child or grandchild under 18. **NJGCA is proud to host this family event - We look forward to seeing you all there!**

PRE-REGISTRATION

The **NORTHEAST 2009** website is up and running! We are currently pre-registering attendees on the website. When you register early, you will **SAVE** a \$10 dollar ticket charge at the door and avoid the long lines. Passes will be made available, but you must sign up as soon as possible!

Register TODAY at: <http://aaspnjnortheast.com/Registration.aspx>



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32nd Annual
Northeast 2009 Automotive Repair Trade Show
at the Meadowlands Expo, Secaucus NJ
March 20 - 22
(Friday, 6pm - 11pm • Saturday, 10 am - 5pm • Sunday, 10 am - 3pm)

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UNDERGROUND STORAGE TANKS: MITIGATING THE RISK

By Eric Dana

There are four important reasons for reading this article. Reason #1 is because this information affects your business in both a small way and in a big way. Reason #2 deals with money. Reason #3 has to do with the government and reason #4 will ... hey, wait a minute – let's go back and review the first two.

#1. You should take a few minutes to read this entire article, then share it with someone with whom you trust your day-to-day business operations. You sell gas and you own tanks. So you or someone at your business is responsible for your underground fuel tanks. This information is for you ... and for them.

The NJCGA has a program for insuring tanks and for providing the risk management services that go along with owning and operating underground tank systems. Do it right and it affects your business in a small way. Get it wrong and it will leave you open to problems in a big way.

Just ask the NJDEP.

#2. This deals with money. The NJGCA program offers insurance for tanks. Some call it “pollution liability”; the NJDEP calls it “FR - Financial Responsibility”. We call it Tank Insurance. And we provide it to over 8,500 tank systems.

The cost for tank insurance is based on a formula. Everyone that buys tank insurance from the NJGCA program will understand this simple equation and how to make it work best for them. The insurance companies won't explain how it works – but we will. We're FR specialists and we work for you.

Reason #3 has to do with the government and NJDEP has already been mentioned twice. They know about your location and your tank systems. We also know that they're learning how to read tank insurance policies. So there will be little room for error in the future. Don't insure your tanks correctly and you'll have some explaining to do to the NJDEP. Worse yet, don't insure your tanks correctly and you'll be unable to fight with your insurance company when there is a claim. Insure with the NJGCA program and there won't be a fight. We get it right.

#4. This has to do with experience. DANA Insurance and Risk Management has been selected to manage the NJGCA Tank Insurance program because we have the knowledge and *the experience*. We've been doing tank insurance *since 1990*.

We understand the NJDEP tank regulations. And everyone knows that regulations change ... and these changes affect your Tank Insurance. Over the next three years, regulations that involve Operator Training and Delivery Prohibition will change in New Jersey. We can help you manage these changes and more. It's what we do.

One important option for NJGCA members is to access the Tank Insurance program through your current insurance broker. Is it the best of both worlds? You be the judge. We can work directly for you or your broker can contact us on your behalf. Either way, we only insure tanks. And you'll get the peace of mind that it is being done right ... in accordance with the regulations.

In summary, we're often the lowest cost for tank insurance allowed by law because we get it right. Contact us for a quote. Call us with a question. Let us know when we can help you. We work hard to be the best in the business of insuring tanks.

Eric C. Dana, CPCU, is a principal with DANA Insurance and Risk Management.

Visit them at www.dana-ins.com. Eric can be reached at 1-800-821-1990 or eric@dana-ins.com.



MEET YOUR TERRITORY MANAGER!

Jack Leli

**Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May,
Cumberland, Gloucester, Ocean & Salem**



Tell us about yourself.

I will be 71 in May and have been married to my wife, Renee, for 46 years. I've lived in Berkeley Township for 37 years and have a daughter maintaining a professional career in Trenton. Like anyone else, I try to keep myself well informed and read quite a bit. I make it a habit of reading the Wall Street Journal and other publications daily.

How did you get started in the industry?

My automotive career started in 1953. I worked after school on Friday's and weekends at a Sunoco station in Westchester County, N.Y. I started by washing cars and trucks and pumping gas. Eventually I became a mechanic. After serving as a dealer service writer and service manager, I became a factory trained service/warranty representative to dealerships in 1971. I worked for three major automakers. In 1981 I went to work for a major O.E.M. manufacturer in sales and was responsible for the entire upper eastern seaboard. After 22 very active years, I retired in 2003.

How did you get started with NJGCA?

I came on board almost right out of retirement. I wasn't doing much and felt out of place being at home all day. I spotted an ad for NJGCA Territory Managers on the internet and that's how I came to know Bill Dressler and Henry Darden. They needed someone and I felt up to it.

Explain how things are different today compared to when you first started?

When I started, it seemed like more parts could be rebuilt and things were easier to work on. Today, computers run everything in an automobile and parts are more complex. All that technology costs more money. The business today is all about number crunching and quick turnover times – which makes it more stressful, in my honest opinion. Unfortunately, fewer people are entering our industry today. That makes it even more important to employ qualified, hard-working people in your shop. But still, at its core, it's the same game - we take care of the motorists and get their cars back out on the road.

How is your territory unique from others?

Southern New Jersey is a big area and very different from one end to the other – both in business climate and in population. I've seen huge terrain changes traveling in just one day. It's never boring. However, you also see a lot of businesses that have closed as new businesses move in. So, for example, while years ago you may have had a dozen service stations in a town, today you have a few competing with "big box" outlets. It can be rough competing with huge businesses like that. But I assure you, they won't stay in South Jersey; they'll be heading north soon enough.

Where do you see things going in the next ten years?

There will be a lot of changes, partially due to the price of oil fluctuating and partially due to environmental standards. We can see it already in hybrid cars – and soon electric cars – being pushed on the public to cut emissions and increase fuel efficiency. There's no doubt that it will eventually filter down to impact the corner mechanics and gasoline stations. We have to be ready for it. That's why it's so important for our members to stay active in NJGCA; they need to stay informed and aware of what changes are coming down the road.

Any advice you can give the small business owners in these tough times?

Use common sense! If you are in business, then be a business person and get with the times! Make sure you have a computer and valid email address to stay informed. Pay attention to what's going on locally to better serve your customers. Stay in compliance with all regulations so the state doesn't cite you for any costly violations. Curb appeal counts for a lot - make sure your business and your employees look presentable. Check out the local competition and do all you can to attract new business. This is all obvious stuff, but when owners get caught up in the daily grind, sometimes they let these things slip. Pay attention to the details!

What are the members saying about NJGCA lately?

Things are getting done and everyone is impressed with the Association changes. Sal has a lot of ambitions for the organization and our staff is doing great work. We've got the right people and the right tools available to our members. The benefits we offer today, compared to only a few years ago, are like night and day. And members who use email are getting information faster than ever. Honestly, all of it is getting noticed. Many have said these things should have been implemented years ago – and they're happy to see it finally done!



LETTERS TO THE OTR EDITOR

Dear NJGCA:

It seems that as retailers, we are constantly getting beaten up out there. No matter if it's from the press, the bureaucrats, or the public – we're always the bad guy.

As a small business owner, that's a bitter pill to swallow. But I know I didn't go into business to win a popularity contest. I got into it to serve my customers, put people to work, and make a living.

I've never broken the rules as a business owner and always run a clean shop. I know a lot of the other guys out there have done the same.

So imagine my surprise – and anger – when the Attorney General released a study last summer citing 350 stations for violations. But if that wasn't enough, she then went berserk and accused stations of “scamming” the public!! I was enraged!!

I know I wasn't alone in my sentiments and wanted someone to take action.

Luckily, NJGCA felt the same way. Before I could even think of how to respond to the Attorney General, Sal and NJGCA were already moving to challenge the study's findings.

The NJGCA team held two press conferences and went after the Attorney General in a very professional manner. They made the public know that the AG's assessment of the little guy was not true.

We truly need that kind of advocacy in Trenton and around the state. I applaud Sal and the entire crew at NJGCA for defending small businesses from that kind of negative public perception.

Keep up the good work!

-Mike Mazza

Ledgewood Sunoco/Roxbury Automotive

Please Send your letters on any topic that would interest NJGCA members.

Letters may be emailed to info@njgca.org or mailed to NJGCA Headquarters at:

66 Morris Avenue - Springfield, New Jersey 07081

Dear OTR Editor,

I am writing to thank NJGCA and Debbie Hill, in particular, for the assistance we received regarding a licensing issue with the State of New Jersey.

Debbie guided us through the paperwork, scheduled and attended our hearing and represented us capably, bringing our case to a successful and money-saving conclusion.

I highly recommend NJGCA membership to all NJ businesses in the gasoline-convenience-automotive industry.

Sincerely,

-Michael D. Baxter

Brennan's Service Center



CLASSROOM UPDATE!

Coming Soon: Emission Repair Technician Classes & More

As you know, the State is in the process of revamping its education requirements. Our Course Curriculum has been submitted to the State of New Jersey and is awaiting final approval.

Though we have not heard anything back yet, we will have night classes in the near future for the ERT license re-certification.

If you are interested in this ERT course - or any other class - please contact Debbie Hill at 973-376-0066 or at debbie@njgca.org to be added to the list!

Thank You!

IT HAPPENED IN MARCH!

March 3, 1931: US officially adopts "The Star-Spangled Banner" as its national anthem

March 4, 1902: The American Automobile Association is established in Chicago.

March 7, 1926: The first transatlantic phone call was made from New York City to London.

March 8, 1817: The New York Stock Exchange is founded.

March 8, 1936: The first stock car race is held in Daytona Beach.

March 12, 1894: Coca-Cola is sold in bottles for the first time, in Vicksburg, MS.

March 13, 1991: Exxon agrees to pay \$1 billion for the clean-up of the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska.

March 15, 1938: Oil is discovered in Saudi Arabia.

March 16, 1802: US Military Academy founded at West Point.

March 16, 1968: GM produces its 100 millionth vehicle, an Oldsmobile Toronado.

March 18, 1974: OPEC ends a five-month oil embargo against the US, Europe and Japan.

March 29, 1973: The last US combat soldiers leave S. Vietnam

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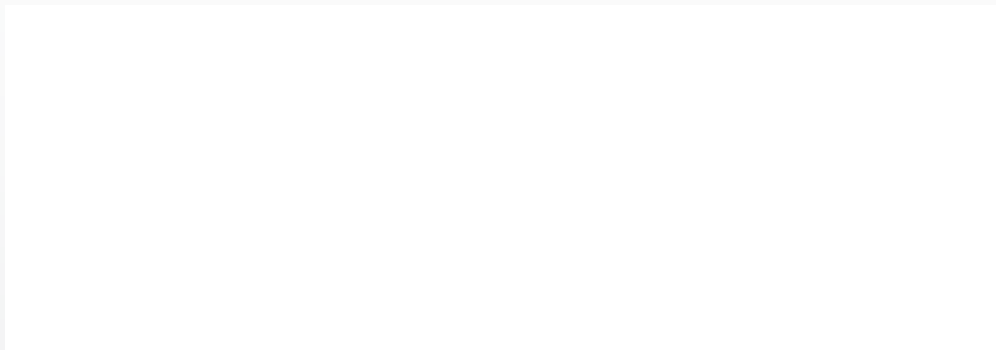




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