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Justice Department Files Suit Against Visa Over Debit Card Practices

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) filed an antitrust lawsuit against Visa Inc. on Sept. 24, alleging that the company stifles debit card competition using its size and dominance, ultimately costing consumers and businesses billions of dollars.

According to the DOJ's complaint, filed in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, Visa penalizes merchants and banks that do not use its payment processing technology to process debit transactions despite the existence of alternatives, reported the Associated Press.

"We allege that Visa has unlawfully amassed the power to extract fees that far exceed what it could charge in a competitive market," said Attorney General Merrick Garland in a statement. "Merchants and banks pass along those costs to consumers, either by raising prices or reducing quality or service. As a result, Visa's unlawful conduct affects not just the price of one thing — but the price of nearly everything."

Per the lawsuit, 60% of U.S. debit card transactions run on Visa's network, earning the company an incremental fee for each transaction. The DOH alleged that Visa leverages the high number of transactions on its network to impose volume commitments on merchants and banks, along with the financial institutions that issue debit cards. Accordingly, this makes it harder for merchants to turn to alternatives such as lower-cost or smaller payment processors without incurring "disloyalty penalties" from Visa.

Visa pushed back against the complaint, stating that the lawsuit does not account for the "ever expanding universe of companies offering new ways to pay for goods and services," said Julie Rottenberg, Visa's general counsel.
The full DOJ filing is available here.

Open Banking Rules Could Alleviate Swipe Fee Issue

Open banking regulations issued by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) could lead to an alternative to the credit card swipe fees that cost retailers and customers billions of dollars each year, according to the National Retail Federation (NRF), which applauded the CFPB's Oct. 22 unveiling of its final Personal Financial Data Rights Rule.

First proposed in October 2023, the Personal Financial Data Rights Rule would require banks to share data on bank accounts, credit cards, prepaid cards, mobile wallets, payment apps and other financial products. They would also be prohibited from charging to do so.

The new regulations primarily seek to make it easier for consumers to change banks, but CFPB Director Rohit Chopra noted they will also "accelerate the shift" to open banking, which includes "pay by bank" services where money can be moved directly from a consumers' bank account to a merchant's bank without having to go through a credit card network such as Visa or Mastercard. "Fintech" providers that offer new forms of payment services would also be an option for consumers.

NRF noted that Visa and Mastercard currently control more than 80% of transactions, and each centrally sets the swipe fees of 2% to 4% charged by all banks that issue credit cards under their brands, instead of the banks competing to offer lower rates.

EIA Report Shows Substantial Drop in Demand

The Energy Information Administration showed substantially lower demand numbers for the week ending Friday in a Wednesday morning report that is likely to be overshadowed by geopolitical uncertainty but lends credence to the notion of some observers that last week's demand statistics were overstated.

EIA posted an 8.521 million b/d implied demand number for gasoline, off 683,000 b/d on the week but more than 500,000 b/d above the same week last year. Distillate demand descended 384,000 b/d to 3.638 million b/d and overall petroleum demand was put at 19.8 million b/d, a drop of 1.539 million b/d.

Crude stocks built by 3.9 million bbl in commercial storage with the Strategic Petroleum Reserve adding 700,000 bbl of oil. Gasoline stocks increased by 1.1 million bbl while distillate stocks fell 1.3 million bbl.

The distillate decline was helped by another robust export number above 1.5 million b/d. Exports of gasoline bested imports by 422,000 b/d as well.

Ahead of the release, petroleum futures were surging thanks to speculation about an Israeli reprisal against Iran. Crude oil benchmarks were up $2-$2.20/bbl while RBOB added more than 5cts and ULSD gains approached 7cts/gal.

About 10 minutes after the data release, some smaller futures increases were witnessed. November West Texas Intermediate was up $1.70 at $71.53/bbl while November RBOB was up just 3.81cts at $2.0047/gal. ULSD for November delivery was ahead 5.79cts at $2.2321/gal.

--Reporting by Tom Kloza

**US Retail Gasoline Prices Fail to
Match Volatility in October Futures**

U.S. retail gasoline prices so far this month have been largely unaffected by volatility in NYMEX RBOB contracts, according to OPIS data.

The national average price of regular unleaded gasoline was $3.2035/gal on Wednesday morning, the sixth-straight day and the eighth day this month that it has held at the $3.20/gal mark, OPIS pricing data showed.

The national retail price this month has ranged from a high of $3.2120/gal on Oct. 10 and a low of $3.1733/gal on Oct. 6, a 1.2% spread.

At the same time, the NYMEX November RBOB contract closed out September at $1.9351/gal and settled Tuesday at $2.0377/gal.

The contract hit a high of $2.1538/gal on Oct. 7, more than 11% above where it began the month. The contract has seen price swings of about 9cts on three of the 11 trading days so far this month, while only three days have brought price moves of less than 1ct.

The steadiness of retail prices has squeezed gross rack-to-retail margins. The national average margin, which began October at an average of 46.8cts/gal, has been below 40cts/gal for 10 days this month. The low for the month so far was hit on Oct. 8, when the margin fell to 33.6cts/gal, more than 28% below the month's high, OPIS MarginPro data showed.

According to OPIS Retail Fuel Watch numbers in the week ended Monday, the number of retail changes from a month earlier were exceeded by the number of wholesale price shifts in 40 states, meaning that gross margins were under pressure in those markets.

--Reporting by Steve Cronin

**Average US Retail Fuel Margins Down,
Public Firms Have Edge: Jefferies**

Average U.S. retail fuel margins in October are about 38cts/gal, down from the 45cts/gal seen in September as rack prices inch up 60 basis points and retail prices decline 1.9% month to month, investment bank Jefferies said Tuesday in a report.

But the large publicly held companies Jefferies watches have advantages over industry norms.

The bank estimated Casey's General Stores' margin at about 41cts/gal. Casey's top-line growth from unit expansion, inside same-store sales increases and stabilizing same-store fuel volumes could "outpace higher industry wide cost inflation growth." Supply chain efficiencies, improvements in inside product mix and acquisition synergies also should help beat rising costs.

Alimentation Couche-Tard's retail fuel margins are trending at about 42.8cts/gal, the bank said. That's down from 49.6cts/gal last year at this time. But Jefferies is bullish about Couche-Tard's potential global growth opportunities.

Couche-Tard's "ability to leverage growth through acquisition, European electric vehicle white space opportunity and industry-leading cents-per-gallon position the company well going forward," the report said.

Murphy USA's retail fuel margins are estimated at about 31cts/gal, higher than the company's 29.7cts/gal margin seen in the second quarter. The estimate increases to 33cts/gal when factoring in product supply and wholesale, which includes renewable fuel credits, or RINs.

Murphy can support slimmer-than-average margins because of efficiencies, and the bank has a positive outlook for the company given the larger favorable fuel margin environment and its track record of returning value to shareholders.

"We see support for higher go-forward industry retail fuel cents per gallon relative to pre-pandemic levels, given operators' higher sensitivity to increasing costs," Jefferies said.

--Reporting by Donna Harris

Q3 Dollar Sales Decline at US Gasoline Stations: Census

Total dollar sales at U.S. gasoline stations declined year to year in the third quarter and were lower than the first two quarters of 2024, according to an update of Census Bureau data Thursday.

Q3 gasoline station sales totaled $155.729 billion, a 5.6% decline from Q3 a year ago and 16% from Q3 in 2022, when gasoline prices peaked.

The third-quarter total is also down 2.9% sequentially from the second quarter and 2.4% from the first quarter of this year, the numbers show.

Though the data suggest inflation has slowed, total dollar sales remain elevated from late 2021 when monthly gasoline station sales exceeded $50 billion for the first time. The bureau's records date back to 1992.

Retail fuel station sales declined each month of the third quarter this year from $52.625 billion in July, to $51.98 billion in August and to $51.124 billion in September.

Monthly sales exceeded $60 billion for the first time in March 2022, peaking three months later in June at about $68 billion and surpassing $60 billion seven months that year. The quarterly record was about $198 billion in the second quarter of 2022.

Since November 2022, total dollar sales have ranged from about $51 billion to just below $60 billion per month.

The numbers are adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, the bureau said.

Unlike gasoline station sales, the bureau said that overall U.S. retail and food service sales for September increased 0.4% from the previous month to $714.4 billion. The total was up. 1.7% year to year.

--Reporting by Donna Harris

US Gasoline Station Wages Drop Final Two Summer Months After June Peak

The average hourly wage for nonmanagerial workers at U.S. gasoline stations declined for a second straight month, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported on Friday.

Average wages for gasoline stations peaked at $17.33 in June, and average wages for gasoline stations with convenience stores peaked at $17.15 in January, the bureau's statistics show.

The average hourly wage at gasoline stations declined by 8cts month to month in August to $17.20. That's after July wages were adjusted down by 5cts. The average wage was up 1.7% from the $16.92 average in August a year ago. The average hourly wage at gasoline stations with convenience stores declined by 9cts month to month in August to $17.01. That's after July wages were adjusted down by 3cts. The average wage was up 1.5% from the year-ago $16.76, the data show.

Some rival channels paying higher average hourly wages than those of the convenience-fuel business saw increases in August. Supermarket wages increased to $17.76 from $17.60 a month ago, and liquor store wages rose to $18.76 from $18.67 a month ago.

Fast food restaurant workers continue to see their hourly pay rise faster than those of the convenience fuel business. In August, the average wage for limited-service restaurants was $16.21, up from $16.18 in July, the bureau reported.

The average hourly wage for nonmanagerial workers across all retail businesses increased to $21.11 in September and $20.98 in August from $20.87 in July, the BLS statistics show.

--Reporting by Donna Harris

Toyota's Answer to the Lengthy Charge, Portable Hydrogen Cartridges

Toyota has been a pioneer in sustainable technology since the inception of the hybrid vehicle into the market decades ago. Most recently, the Japanese company will be showcasing a series of technological developments in hydrogen energy at Japan Mobility Bizweek, a technology show that will take place at the Makuhari Messe, in Chiba Prefecture.

As the industry looks to new sources of renewable energy, the talk about hydrogen has become more prevalent - this may seem a long time away from reaching the auto care industry - automakers have been crafting this technology since the early 90’s. Aside from the Liquid hydrogen-powered GR Corolla that will be present at the show, Toyota will also expose their latest innovation in hydrogen, the portable hydrogen cartridge. Hydrogen is the ultimate clean energy that emits no CO_2 during use. In addition, CO_2 emissions can also be minimized during the production process when renewable energy sources such as wind and solar are used. Hydrogen has a dual function, as it can generate electricity in a fuel cell, while at the same time be used as a combustible fuel source.

The cartridge was originally a part of Toyota’s mobility technology subsidiary, Woven. This arm of Toyota produced the first prototype in 2022, without knowing if the automaker would allow production and development to continue past the first prototype – which they did. The current product on display at the Japanese technology exposition is much smaller and lighter, and Toyota claims that its development corresponds to the technology used for reducing the size and weight of hydrogen tanks in electric vehicles. This technological innovation could mean the end of the lengthy EV charging process. The cartridge is intended to be a direct plug-in to the vehicles charging port and would eliminate the need to find a charging system and wait out the charging timing.

Ford Runs Into Problems with Tesla Supercharger Adapter in Vehicles

Months after providing its customers with North American Charging Standard adapters to charge their EVs at Tesla Superchargers, Ford is now cautioning drivers to avoid using them, according to Green Car Reports.

Leading the way in adopting NACS for its vehicles, Ford first made the decision to do so last year before shipping them out to customers this past March. Since then, several other automakers have also moved to offer NACS adapters, though the only other companies that have sent out adapters are currently Rivian and General Motors.

Last week, Ford issued a bulletin warning that its NACS adapters may reduce a vehicle's charging speed, and may potentially cause damage to its charging port.

"Ford identified a potential issue with a batch of adapters sent earlier in the year where over time, continued usage may result in reduced charging speeds," the company said in a statement. "Ford does not recommend using the identified adapter."

The issue is being categorized by Ford as a customer service action rather than a full recall, with the automaker planning to ship out replacement adapters by Oct. 28. As such, owners of these vehicles must make sure the shipping addresses associated with their FordPass accounts are up-to-date by Oct. 24 in order to receive a replacement.

GM and Rivian have not seemed to have experienced such issues with their adapters. A Rivian spokesperson stated drivers have no need to cease use of NACS adapters with their Rivian vehicles.

General Motors to Discontinue the Ultium Battery Brand in New Battery Production Strategy

General Motors will be discontinuing its Ultium battery system brand name as it develops a new system for producing batteries, reports Inside EVs.

Ultium was introduced four years ago as being a battery that could accommodate all of GM's future models, and was thought to make it easier for the automaker to produce enough batteries at scale to make EVs profitable.

However, this turned out to not be the case, leading GM Vice President of Battery Cell and Pack Kurt Kelty to announce this week that the company would be moving past Ultium.

"It now makes business sense to transition from one-size-fits-all to new program specific batteries," said Kelty at the annual Investor Day presentation. "As we do so, we will sunset the brand name Ultium for our EV batteries and technologies."

Until now, GM has produced EVs with nickel-cobalt-manganese-aluminum cells through a joint venture with LG Energy Solution. But the automaker is now in talks with TDK Corp to produce lithium-iron-phosphate batteries in the U.S.

GM will now turn to utilizing different battery chemistries and cell shapes to create batteries optimized for various vehicle models. This will include the addition of high-nickel, mid-nickel and lithium-iron-phosphate cathodes in future models.

Though lithium-iron-phosphate batteries are more cost-effective than nickel-manganese-cobalt cells, last longer, and have superior thermal performance, the downside is a decrease in energy density.

Battery research and development will commence at the Wallace Battery Cell Innovation Center at GM's Warren, Michigan, campus, as well as a Battery Cell Development Center that's expected to be up and running by 2027.

Mercedes-Benz to Launch In-House Battery Recycling for Electric Vehicle Production

Mercedes-Benz has opened what it claims to be the first battery recycling plant from an automaker that will recycle EV batteries in-house and use them in future vehicles, reports Electrek.

The plant, located in southern Germany, will allow for a 96% recycling rate from Mercedes, using an integrated mechanical-hydrometallurgical process that preserves raw materials like lithium, nickel, and cobalt.

Mercedes has argued its hydrometallurgical process is more energy efficient and less wasteful than the pyrometallurgy seen in Europe today.

All steps of the recycling process are handled within the plant: shredding battery modules, drying and processing active battery materials, and sorting and separating plastics, copper, aluminium, and iron.

Through a multi-stage chemical process, cobalt, nickel, and lithium are extracted to be used in the creation of new battery cells.

With an annual capacity of 2,500 tonnes, the plant is expected to provide materials for over 50,000 battery modules to be used for new Mercedes EVs, with plans to increase production volumes and expand its recycling capabilities in the future.

Survey Finds Unreliable Public Chargers Continue to Hinder US EV Ownership

Unreliable public chargers continue to be an issue for U.S. electric vehicle owners, Plug In America, a nonprofit that promotes the shift to electric vehicles, said in a new survey.

Concerns like EV cost, battery range and battery durability decline once consumers acquire an EV, the organization said Wednesday in an online presentation. But two concerns - charger unreliability and extreme weather's impact on EVs - have increased.

Worry over access to public chargers declines once consumers own an EV – but not by much, the survey showed.

Other recent consumer surveys have also suggested access to reliable EV chargers has hurt greater adoption of the vehicles. The global McKinsey Mobility Consumer Pulse study released in June found that 29% of EV owners said they would likely switch back to an internal combustion vehicle, primarily because of difficulties with charging. The inability to charge at home and the "stress" over having to charge the vehicle were top reasons to get rid of their EV.

And the J.D. Power 2024 U.S. Electric Vehicle Consideration Study said the top five reasons for rejecting EVs are mostly related to charging. Among the shoppers who said they were "somewhat unlikely" or "very unlikely" to consider an EV, 52% cited the lack of access to charging stations, up three percentage points from a year earlier.

In the J.D. Power survey, other top reasons for rejection were purchase price, limited driving distance per charge, time required to charge and the inability to charge at home or work.

--Reporting by Donna Harris

Report: Falling Battery Prices to Boost EV Adoption in Next Two Years

A recent study from Goldman Sachs suggests a gradual decline in battery prices may lead to a boon in EV ownership within the next two years, according to Inside EVs.

The price of lithium-ion batteries has already been on a steady decline. By the end of 2024, researchers expect global average battery pack prices to fall to $111 per kilowatt-hour. Last year, that number was $149/kWh; in 2011, it was $780/kWh.

By 2026, battery pack prices are forecasted to fall another 26% to $82/kWh: roughly half of what prices would have been just three years prior in 2023. By the end of the decade, Goldman predicts prices to reach $64/kWh.

Factors contributing to this decline in battery prices has been attributed to advances in technology allowing for more energy to be contained at a lower cost, and a decline in prices for metals like lithium and cobalt.

Goldman Sachs has noted that the 2026 estimate would mark a milestone, as it would make the cost of owning an EV equivalent to that of an internal combustion engine, free of subsidies.

As such, Nikhil Bhandari, co-head of Goldman Sachs Research's Asia-Pacific Natural Resources and Clean Energy Research, argued that this would likely lead to more consumers pursuing EV ownership come 2026.

"We think we're going to see a strong comeback in demand in 2026 purely from an economics perspective," stated Bhandari in the report. "We believe 2026 is when a consumer-led adoption phase will largely begin."

GM, Ford Both Saw EV Sales Increase in Q3 2024

General Motors saw a significant increase in electric vehicle deliveries in the third quarter of the year, helping to ease some concern about a perceived slowdown in the EV market.

Ford also saw a year-to-year increase, but its EV sales totals lagged those of GM.

GM this week reported it delivered a record 32,095 EVs during the quarter, a 46% increase from the second quarter and 60% higher than was seen during the same quarter last year. The company said its share of the U.S. EV market rose from 7.1% in the second quarter to 9.5% in the third quarter.

In a statement accompanying news of company performance during the quarter, GM Executive Vice President Rory Harvey attributed the gains to the diversity of the company's EV offerings.

"GM's EV portfolio is growing faster than the market because we have an all-electric vehicle for just about everybody, no matter what they like to drive," he said.

Ford delivered 23,509 electric vehicles during the quarter, up 12.2% from Q3 2023. Year to date, Ford has sold 67,689 EVs, a 45% increase from the same period last year.

Ford saw larger growth among its hybrid offerings. company sold 48,101 hybrids during the quarter, a 38% increase from the same time last year. Year-to-date hybrid sales totaled 140,344, a 45.4% year-to-year increase, the company said.

GM's strong performance in EV sales came as its total vehicle sales fell by nearly 2.2% from Q3 2023. The company delivered a total of 659,601 vehicles in the quarter, down from 674,336 during the same period last year.

Last month, the company announced owners of GM EVs would be able to use Tesla's charging network, a move expected to boost the company's sales. Ford EVs were already able to use the Tesla network.

During the quarter, Ford sold a total of 504,039 vehicles, up 0.7% from Q3 2023. Its sales of ICE powered vehicles was 432,429, down 2.8% from the same time last year. Year to date, Ford's ICE vehicle sales totaled 1.34 million, 1.8% fewer than the same period last year, the company said.

--Reporting by Steve Cronin

Cybercab and Robovan, Tesla Aims at the Autonomous Mass Transit Sector

Tesla offered last Thursday an event with plenty of hype in their plan to rollout robotaxis, a bigger idea within their autonomous-driving vehicle push. However, the event left doubts as to the lack of details about the rollout plan itself, and most importantly, regulatory approval.

This event, according to experts from Yahoo Finance, and Reuters, only demonstrates the visible gap between the valuation of the stock price and what experts consider value. As stated by Yahoo Finance: "On Friday, more than $60 billion was wiped off of Tesla's valuation in a selloff, a sharp reversal from the stock's recent momentum. Shares had soared over 70% since Musk started touting AI in April. The rally brought Tesla's market value to over $760 billion ahead of the robotaxi announcement— more than 14 times GM's (GM) market cap and nearly 18 times Ford's (F)."

The automaker founded by Elon Musk showcased at "We, Robot", an event held at Warner Bros. Studios, the Robovan and Cybercab concepts, two autonomous vehicle systems, fully self-driving with no actual steering wheel, accelerator pedal or brake pedal. According to Musk, the estimated price for the Cybercab is going to be $30,000, as part of a strategy aimed at making this available for mass transit projects worldwide. Musk also stated that his estimated running cost would be about 20 cents per mile, which is far less expensive than the estimated $1 per mile of a city bus.

The South African native also stated that he expected production of the Cybercab to begin in 2026, with availability of actual vehicles in 2027.

The lingering question, as always, is how will this affect the auto care industry? Telsa is well-known for not allowing third party experts to tap into the repair market, both on the software side, and parts supply. With many projected mass transit projects to adopt the Tesla models, will other automakers follow suit? And will they be more lenient in allowing the aftermarket auto car industry to perform the much-needed work…

End is Near for Internal Combustion Engines at Toyota, Suggests Chief Scientist

Toyota has hinted that it may soon cease production of gas powered vehicles in the U.S., reports Bloomberg.

The news comes from Gill Pratt, Toyota's chief scientist, who shared with a Bloomberg reporter that the company is currently in discussions of when to make the move.

"In the US, there is a decision being made now—and I'm not a part of it—as to whether to stop making pure ICE for the US market," said Pratt. "Just the fact that we're thinking of that means that, OK, it must be close."

Toyota's electrified vehicle sales are on track to surpass that of ICE vehicles. While electrified vehicles made up less than 20% of the company's September sales two years ago, that number had shot up to 48% last month.

Currently, the automaker is planning to open a $13.9 billion battery factory in North Carolina that will supply cells for EVs and hybrids.

A decrease in spot prices for battery raw materials has led Pratt to feel optimistic about fully electric and hybrid vehicle production, which has been Toyota's biggest concern with regard to EV input costs.

Additionally, Pratt is encouraged by the potential of an excess in renewable energy that may allow for the production of low-carbon liquid fuels.

Congresswoman Pushes for Auto Technician Tools to Be Covered in Education Savings Plans

For many, the cost of tools has proven to be one of the biggest barriers to entry for the auto repair industry—but one Congressperson's recent bill aims to alleviate that burden for technicians.

According to a recent press release, the Fairness for the Trades Act, introduced by Rep. Marie Gluesenkamp Perez, would expand eligible uses of a 529 education savings plan to cover the cost of tools needed for technical careers.

Funds from 529 education savings plans may be used at any accredited college, university, vocational school, or other post-secondary educational institutions in the U.S. It's also recently been expanded to cover costs associated with registered apprenticeships.

A former shop owner and Right to Repair advocate herself, Rep. Gluesenkamp Perez's bill would expand 529 education savings plans to cover the purchase of qualified business expenses in auto repair and maintenance fields, as well as construction, plumbing, electrical, logging, fishing, and farming.

"For hardworking young people who have access to a 529 savings plan, it's important they can choose their own career path where they do what they love and are skilled at," said Rep. Gluesenkamp Perez. "Buying the tools to start a career or business in the trades is expensive–and these plans need to support toolboxes, not only tuition."

Dealerships Narrow Gap, While Independent Shops Maintain Lead in Customer Satisfaction

While independent repair shops still lead dealership service departments in customer satisfaction, a recent study from CDK Global suggests that gap may have slightly shrunk in the past year, but also highlights the strengths independent shops have over dealerships.

The CDK Service Shopper 4.0 study surveyed over 2,000 customers who have received car maintenance and repairs on their opinions of dealership service.

Dealership service departments' Net Promoter Score, which represents a customer's likelihood to recommend a business, was 59. It marks a 14-point increase from 2023.

Independent shops still outrank dealerships with a NPS score of 66, but their former 11-point lead decreased to seven points this year.

For the first time, CDK evaluated the role phones play in a customer's experience with booking an appointment.

64% of customers will opt to use their phones for scheduling visits. Many respondents reported experiencing issues with being able to arrange dealership appointments on their phone, which negatively impacted their chances of recommending the business to others.

Additionally, customers who were put on hold by a dealership had a 20% lower NPS score on average, with the average hold time for dealership customers being over eight minutes.

Respondents expressed much negativity surrounding the transparency of pricing at dealerships, with personalized offers and discounts ranking at number two on what customers want from their auto service provider, marking a first for the survey.

In turn, CDK underscored the value of artificial intelligence tools to assist with generating custom discounts for customers, as well as helping answer phones or responding to inquiries.

The study also emphasized the importance of offering a waiting room with amenities such as Wi-Fi and refreshments to customers, with most preferring to wait on their vehicle as it's serviced.

In terms of advantages independent repair providers have over dealership service departments, pricing has not played as big of a factor, falling from the number one reason consumers chose an independent in 2022 to fourth this year.

While the top three reasons consumers chose a dealership were service staff knowledge, existing relationships, and a good reputation, for independents, good reputation, convenient location, and existing relationships ranked as top reasons, in that order.

Numbers: What's Keeping Shop Owners Awake at Night?

As the technician shortage challenges auto repair shop owners across the U.S., there is a need to find and hire qualified technicians to take up the mantle left by those techs who are now retiring.

According to the 2024 Ratchet+Wrench Industry Survey Report, for 55% of shop owners—down 15% from 2023—the ability to find and employ auto technicians remains the biggest difficult obstacle to overcome while the second major concern of shop owners was related to the country's continuing inflation.

Here are the top three things keeping shop owners up at night:

- Technician shortage: 55%
- Rising business costs: 15%
- Availability of repair information:

8%

Tesla Issues Fifth—and Largest—Cybertruck Recall of 2024

Tesla's latest 2024 Cybertruck recall is its biggest one yet, according to Reuters.

Over 27,000 vehicles are covered in the recall, which includes most Cybertrucks in the U.S.

A delayed rearview image may occur in these vehicles due to the system not completing a shutdown process prior to booting up. The image may not display within two seconds of going into reverse, and may also appear as blank for up to six to eight seconds.

So far, Tesla has received 45 warranty claims and four field reports potentially related to the issue.

The vehicle has been fraught with roadblocks since its inception, having experienced two years of delays from production and supply chain issues.

Since finally being delivered to consumers in Nov. 2023, several recalls have been issued for the Cybertruck. This newest one marks the fifth one since January, following one in April for a loose accelerator pedal pad and another in June for faulty windshield wipers and exterior trim.

Honda Recalls 1.7M Vehicles Over Steering Wheel Issues

Honda has issued a voluntary recall for around 1.7 million 2022-2025 Acura and Honda vehicles in the U.S. due to an issue with the steering wheel, according to a news release.

The recall includes the following models:

- 2023-2025 Acura Integra
- 2024-2025 Acura Integra Type S
- 2022-2025 Honda Civic Sedan
- 2025 Honda Civic Hybrid Sedan
- 2022-2025 Honda Civic Hatchback
- 2025 Honda Civic Hybrid Hatchback
- 2023-2025 Honda Civic Type R
- 2023-2025 Honda CR-V
- 2023-2025 Honda CR-V Hybrid
- 2025 Honda CR-V Fuel Cell
- 2023-2025 Honda HR-V

According to Honda, an improperly manufactured steering gearbox worm wheel is prone to swelling in hot and humid environments, leading to a reduction in grease film thickness between the worm wheel and worm gear.

The worm gear spring preload in recalled vehicles may also be set too high as well, increasing the sliding force between the components and creating friction, which may in turn cause abnormal noises when steering, difficulty steering, or the steering wheel becoming stuck.

Owners will be notified through mail beginning in November, and dealers will be instructed to redistribute or add grease as needed and to replace the worm gear spring with an improved part.

154K Jeep Hybrid SUVs at Risk of Fire When in Park and Turned Off

Stellantis has issued a recall for 194,000 plug-in hybrid electric Jeep SUVs globally over fire risks, reports CNN.

The recall applies to certain 2020-2024 model year Jeep Wranglers, and 2022-2024 Jeep Grand Cherokee plug-in hybrids. The bulk of recalled units, 154,000, are in the U.S., with 14,000 in Canada, 700 in Mexico, and almost 26,000 outside North America.

Reports of 13 fires have been received by Stellantis, which is now instructing owners to park their vehicles outside and away from structures. All the incidents happened when cars were parked and turned off. The recall was prompted by an internal investigation that followed a routine review of customer data.

A remedy is still being determined by the automaker, but it currently believes the issue lies with a battery component, and that around 5% of recalled vehicles have the defect.

Stellantis added that, to reduce risk, these vehicles' battery level should be depleted, owners should avoid charging them, and should park away from other vehicles and structures.

Hybrid Car Sparks Overnight Multi-Vehicle Fire in Virginia

A defect in a hybrid vehicle caused a massive fire to spread across multiple vehicles overnight in Woodbridge, Virginia this week, reports FOX 5 DC.

Around 3:43 a.m., crews arrived at the Summerland Heights Apartment complex to find multiple vehicles on fire.

Though the flames were extinguished quickly, eight vehicles were destroyed, with an additional three damaged. Officials said that the fire was first sparked by an electrical malfunction in a hybrid vehicle, with leaking gasoline helping it spread.

EV and hybrid fires aren't common—but when they happen, they can be dangerous, especially with them typically occurring when a vehicle has been left unattended. This past August, more than 50 Rivian vehicles caught on fire while sitting at a manufacturing plant.

As safety officials attempt to establish standards for preventing and combating vehicle fires, there has been much conversation on what action needs to be taken to minimize the likelihood of these fires and the damage they can cause.

Work is underway to achieve just that by improving aspects of battery technology, such as the self-extinguishing EV battery currently under development by researchers.

Missouri Shop Explosion Leads to Death of Owner, Employee Injured

A little after 1 p.m. on Oct. 16, the owner of Hart's Auto Repair Shop had been cutting into a 55-gallon drum with a cutting torch when it exploded. Investigators say this was possibly due to flammable material inside the barrel.

Residents nearby recalled hearing a loud boom and seeing smoke. An apartment building close to the shop was evacuated while authorities arrived and got the fire under control.

Though not connected, this is the second fire erupting from an explosion within Excelsior Springs in less than three months.

One employee was also injured, though was taken to the hospital and is expected to recover.

California Bolsters Ban on Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products

California Governor Gavin Newsom signed into law a bill which defines new enforcement mechanisms to combat the sale of illegal tobacco products for the California attorney general's office and the establishment of a list of all tobacco products that are permissibly unflavored and allowed to be sold in California.

Assembly Bill (AB) 3218 was authored by Assembly Speaker pro Tempore Jim Wood (D-Healdsburg) and Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas (D-Salinas) and was created to help ensure the successful implementation of the state's flavored tobacco ban. The prohibition went into effect after the U.S. Supreme Court in January declined to hear a challenge against the law brought by R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co.

Tobacco companies make and market flavored tobacco products, many of which hold special appeal to young people and underage smokers, according to the "2024 National Youth Tobacco Survey." Part of the goal of the state's initial ban was to curtail use among this cohort.

Effective Jan. 1, 2025, the new legislation will help ensure full compliance of the ban by:

- Establishing a publicly available list of all tobacco products that are permissibly unflavored and allowed to be sold in California.
- Authorizing the attorney general to seek civil penalties against sellers for selling products not appearing on the Unflavored List and to omit any tobacco products within the list lacking FDA authorization.
- Rendering products not appearing on the Unflavored List subject to seizure, aiding in enforcement efforts by state or local law enforcement agencies.
- Revising the definition of a prohibited "characterizing flavor" to specifically include products that impart menthol-like cooling sensations, as well as other flavors that are "distinguishable by an ordinary consumer."

To assist local governments in combatting the illegal sale of flavored tobacco products, Bonta earlier in the year announced new funding through the California Department of Justice's 2024-2025 Tobacco Grant Program, which provides close to $28.5 million in grant funding to eligible local agencies.

EIA Forecasts Average Heating Costs to Remain Essentially Flat This Winter

Americans are expected to see heating costs remain essentially flat in most parts of the country this winter, as declining energy prices are offset by expectations of colder weather, the Energy Information Administration said Tuesday.

EIA, however, warned that residents in the Midwest are expected to see heating costs rise by 2% to 11%, depending on their energy source, as the return of normal weather patterns raises costs over those seen during last year's mild winter.

The base case forecast, released Tuesday, expects Americans who heat using natural gas will spend an average $602 during the winter, a 1% increase from heating costs last year.

About 45% of U.S. homes heat with natural gas, and prices for residential consumers this year are an average 4% lower than last year. But EIA expects that homes that heat with natural gas will use 48,000 cubic feet during the winter, a 5% increase from last year. The EIA forecast breaks down spending on a regional basis to cover differences in price changes and winter weather forecasts.

On a regional basis, Northeast gas users are expected to pay $772 this winter, up 1%; Midwest users are expected to pay $587, an 11% increase; Southern users $487, a 4% decrease, and Western users $573, a 6% decrease.

Propane is used to heat about 5% of American homes, and EIA expects the cost of propane to average $2.40/gal this winter, a 5% decrease from last winter. But with colder weather expected, EIA forecasts propane consumption to rise 11% this winter and heating costs to total an average $1,190 this winter, unchanged from last year.

The EIA expects spending will rise 1% for propane users in the Northeast to $1,670 this winter. The Midwest is expected to see the largest proportional increase, up 2% to $1,230 while the South is expected to see costs drop 2% to $1,130.

Heating oil serves as the primary source of heat for only 4% of American homes, with 80% of that use concentrated in the Northeast. EIA expects heating oil users to spend $1,410 this winter, a 5% decrease from last year's costs. EIA said it expects the average home that uses heating oil to consume 400 gallons this winter, a 4% increase from last year. Prices, however, are expected to average $3.50/gal, or 9% lower than last year.

EIA noted that heating oil prices - and refiners making the fuel - are facing pressure due to less domestic consumption and lower global consumption of diesel as well additional use of renewable diesel in the U.S. market.

Families that heat their homes with electricity can expect to see costs rise 2% this winter, to an average $1,050, EIA said. The higher cost is due largely to an expected increase in electricity use this winter, as the price of electricity remains essentially unchanged from last year, according to EIA.

On a regional basis, costs are expected to rise 5% in the Northeast to an average $1,390; 6% in the Midwest to $1,200 and 2% in the West to $1,070. Costs are expected to fall 1% in the South to $950.

--Reporting by Steve Cronin,

Member of US Fuel Theft Ring Pleads Guilty to Skimming Fraud, Identity Theft

A member of a theft ring that installed skimmers on gasoline pumps in three states pleaded guilty to several charges related to the scam, authorities said in a news release Tuesday.

Deonelky Tabares Cid, of Tampa, Fla., pleaded guilty to conspiracy, four counts of wire fraud, six counts of access device fraud and one count of aggravated identity theft, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Florida.

Court records show Cid was indicted along with four other co-defendants in March and arrested in May. The theft ring was active from November 2020 through March 2022.

The team installed skimmers on fuel dispensers in Alabama, Louisiana and Florida to steal credit and debit account numbers, use the information to make counterfeit cards, which were used to buy large amounts of diesel fuel, the indictment said.

Cid and the others drove vehicles with a "fuel bladder" system that allowed them to fake pumping fuel into the vehicle's tank when the diesel was being diverted into a larger hidden tank. The stolen fuel was then offloaded into 9,500-gal tanker trucks and sold to a gasoline station associated with one of the co-conspirators, authorities said.

Cid faces a minimum of two years in federal prison for aggravated identity theft, up to 20 years for each count of wire fraud, up to 10 years on each count of access device fraud and up to five years for the conspiracy count. He also could pay restitution to the victims of the scam.

Cid's sentencing date has not been scheduled.

Trials for co-defendants Luis Edel Trujillo Pena, Deyvis Hernandez, Luis Ernesto Vigil Ochoa and Isvaldo Guerra Perdomo are set for January.

--Reporting by Donna Harris

Promotion Inequity Stalls Narrowing of Gender Pay Gap

A gender promotion gap is the primary factor behind stalled efforts to further narrow the gender pay gap, according to new data from Yale.

Kelly Shue, a professor of finance at Yale School of Management, conducted research that found women are around 13% less likely to be promoted than men, which is a major driver in persistent income inequality, reported CNBC.

Shue noted that about 70% of the gender wage gap is due to women occupying different roles compared to men; however, they are paid less even when men and women occupy the same position. Currently, women earn 84 cents for every $1 men earn, according to an analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data by the National Women's Law Center.

Although women have made significant progress in corporate America, system bias and other factors mean barriers remain in place. According to the annual Women in the Workplace study from Lean In and McKinsey, women are less likely than men to be hired into entry-level roles, and from there, are slower to advance to manager and director levels, with 81 women promoted for every 100 men.

"Because of this 'broken rung' in the corporate ladder, men significantly outnumber women at the manager level, making it incredibly difficult for companies to support sustained progress at more senior levels," Lean In noted.

Unconscious bias can also be a factor, according to Shue, who described how people's mental pictures of the most successful managers often have stereotypically male qualities such as having an aggressive leadership style, embracing competition and more. Common advice often focuses on ways women can change their behavior and self-advocate.

When Is The Best Time To Have Your Clerks Certified To Sell Tobacco?

NOW. Now, before your clerk fails a sting. If your certified clerk fails a sting, you receive one point against your license. If another certified clerk (because you fired the first one) fails a sting, you will have a second point against your license. It is not until the third certified clerk fails a sting that your lottery and tobacco license will be pulled. Even in this case there is a benefit, after serving your suspension, the three points will be removed.

If an uncertified clerk fails a sting, you will receive two points against your license. Let's say you train your clerks then. The next failed sting will add another point, making three points. Your license will be pulled for a year, and there is nothing you can do about it. It still makes sense to have your clerks certified after the first failed sting for two reasons. A certified clerk is less likely to fail that second sting. If they do, the three points will be removed from your license after you serve your suspension. If you don't have your clerk certified, only three of your four points will be removed and you will be well on your way to another suspension or revocation.

A certified clerk is much less likely to sell to underage customers, meaning you are less likely to have to deal with the hassle of a failed sting. It just makes good business sense to certify your clerks. Remember training them is not the same as certifying them.

ONE MORE THING TO DO TODAY. CHECK YOUR CLERKS CERTIFICATION. IT EXPIRES AFTER THREE YEARS. IF YOUR EMPLOYEE'S CERTIFICATION IS EXPIRED, IT IS THE SAME AS IF IT NEVER EXISTED.

For more information on certifying your clerks call the association at 518-452-4367

Your Inspection License May be Worth Money

Depending on where you are located, it may be possible to sell your license. Before merely turning it in, contact the association for further information.

DMV Record Retrieval

DMV record retrieval is available to association members and affiliates at a cost of $12 per record. Additionally, you may order DMV certified paper abstracts of driver's license, vehicle registration, and vehicle title records for an additional fee of $2 per abstract. Please call (518) 452-4367, (585) 924-4423, (607) 723-1849 (315) 455-1301or (716) 656-1035

CTA Regulatory Update

A recent post from K&L Gates highlights a troubling warning from FinCEN when it comes to filing BOI reports:

However, as we quickly approach year end, that compliance window continues to shorten, Reporting Companies should ensure that they have positioned themselves to meet the 1 January 2025 filing deadline. We note that the analysis for reporting under the CTA can be complex and time consuming and one that must be done on an entity-by-entity basis. ***FinCEN has said that it cannot rule out potential technical issues or website outages due to the expected high volume of filings the last two weeks of the year. FinCEN's stated position is that a potential failure or difficulties of their system to accept filings for technical reasons will not excuse late filings****. As such, the CTA should remain a priority well before the last few weeks of the year to allocate sufficient time to determine which entities may be Reporting Companies and to prepare any required filings, and we are encouraging our clients to file sooner rather than at the last minute.*

FinCEN is worried its systems won't be able to handle high volumes come year-end but is preemptively putting the blame on filers.

FinCEN also quietly moved the goalposts when it updated its BOI FAQs to reflect a new position regarding the large company exemption. Here's Piliero Mazza with the summary:

One of the requirements causing headaches for many businesses is the "operating presence at a physical office in the United States"—many companies abandoned their physical office space during COVID. A number of clients have inquired whether a home office in a personal residence qualifies as a "physical office" under the exemption. For a personal residence to qualify as the "physical office," the entity that qualifies for the exemption must itself lease or own the physical location, regularly conduct business at that location, and the location must be physically distinct from the place of business of any other unaffiliated entity. Thus, a company must actually rent or own the space in the personal residence that it uses to qualify for the large operating company exemption.

In a post-covid world where remote work is increasingly becoming the norm, this is yet another example of how challenging CTA compliance will be.

Attention All Members: Filing a FINCEN BOI Report

We have been reporting the necessity for our membership to file a FINCEN BOI report. Although there are several legal challenges to the requirement to file the report and the possibility of legislative action to modify the requirement for filing deadlines, the requirement still stands as of this moment. One legal challenge was successfully upheld, but the Department of the Treasury has claimed that the challenge only applies to the plaintiffs in the case, and not all pertinent members.

There have been several companies that have solicited businesses to file the form for them. While some may be legitimate, there is no reason to pay them for something that takes only a few minutes to do online. **Worse yet, some of these solicitors are scammers, trying to obtain your business and personal information for the purpose of stealing your identity.**

Several videos have been posted which purport to explain step-by-step instructions for filing the BOI report online. Many of these are incomplete, or worse yet contain inaccurate statements. After reviewing several videos and comparing them to the guidelines published by the Department of the Treasury, the best video we have found is

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HxBmPsF5Ufc

To file a report online go to https://fincen.gov/boi

Some things to remember:

1. Even if you are exempt, you are still required to file a BOI report. You simply check the box indicating that you are exempt, and enter the required information.
2. Request a FINCEN ID number. It will make future filings easier.
3. Businesses which were created before January 1, 2024 must file before January 1, 2025.
4. Businesses which were created this year are required to file the report within 90 days of the effective date of their registration.
5. Businesses which are created after January 1, 2025 are required to file this report within 30 days of the effective date of their registration.
6. Should any information for your business change, such as a change of address for the business or any owner or a change in the business ownership, you must update the filing within 30 days.
7. Failure to file or update a report on time may result in a civil penalty of up to $500 per day.
8. Failure to file or update a report on time may result in a criminal penalty of up to 2 years in prison and a $10,000 fine.

NYVIP MESSAGE No. 306

DATE: 10/04/2024

TO: ALL NYVIP3 INSPECTION STATIONS

FROM: OPUS INSPECTION

SUBJECT: CRITICAL UPDATE: ADHESIVE ISSUE WITH BLUE INTERNAL STICKER STOCK

PLEASE BRING THIS MESSAGE TO THE ATTENTION OF THE STATION OWNER AND/OR MANAGER

Opus inspection has recently discovered a manufacturing problem with some 2025 Blue Internal Sticker Stock causing them to not adhere properly to windshields. **sticker stock with the following range of serial numbers may not adhere to a vehicle windshield**: **2520000001-2521600000**. (The sticker stock serial number can be found in the lower left portion of the sticker.)

****Inspection stations should affix a non-sticking inspection sticker with clear tape. ****

Law enforcement will be notified that inspection stickers may be affixed with clear tape.

Approximately 3,628 stations have been affected by this issue. Opus will be shipping adhesive overlays or replacement sticker stock to impacted stations as soon as they become available. A follow-up NYVIP message with instructions will be provided once these fixes are ready.

If your station has received the affected stock and is experiencing issues or has any questions, please contact the Opus Help Desk at 1-866-OBD-TEST (623-8378) or email Opus Inspection at NYVIP3Info@Opusinspection.com.

NYVIP MESSAGE No. 307

DATE: 10/11/2024

TO: ALL NYVIP3 INSPECTION STATIONS

FROM: OPUS INSPECTION

SUBJECT: UPDATE REGARDING ADHESIVE ISSUE WITH BLUE INTERNAL STICKER STOCK

PLEASE BRING THIS MESSAGE TO THE ATTENTION OF THE STATION OWNER AND/OR MANAGER

As previously noticed in NYVIP message #306, some inspection stations have been issued 2025 Blue Internal Sticker Stock that due to a manufacturing problem is causing them to not adhere properly to windshields.

Opus inspection continues to ship out the adhesive overlays to stations and has begun to send out replacement sticker stock to impacted stations.

If you are currently using stock with **numbers 2520000001-2521600000**, please use the new sticker stock as soon as you receive it by damaging out the numbers in the above range.

Until then, please continue to issue the sticker stock you have on hand utilizing clear tape or the overlay.

If your station has received the affected stock and is experiencing issues or has any questions, please contact the Opus Help Desk at 1-866-OBD-TEST (623-8378) or email Opus Inspection at NYVIP3Info@Opusinspection.com.

NYVIP MESSAGE No. 308

DATE: 10/17/2024

TO: ALL NYVIP3 INSPECTION STATIONS

FROM: OPUS INSPECTION

SUBJECT: NYVIP3 SOFTWARE UPDATE – VERSION 24.01.04

PLEASE BRING THIS MESSAGE TO THE ATTENTION OF THE STATION OWNER AND/OR MANAGER

A NYVIP3 software update to version **24.01.04** will be rolled out to all NYVIP3 Inspection Stations starting 10/04/24. **You must accept and load the new software update when you are prompted to do so by your NYVIP3 Computerized Vehicle Inspection System (CVIS) analyzer.**

This software version includes important updates to the operation of the inspection equipment and overall system enhancements.

Software Update Includes:

- Camera Update
- A one-time message will display notifying inspectors of upcoming license expiration in 60 days.
- Incorporated OBD interface battery charge level check.
- Updated access to VERIFI

If your CVIS has a successful broadband connection, you will receive the update anytime the CVIS powered on. Once the update is received, a message will display on your system stating: “A software update has been downloaded and is ready to install on this unit. Estimated time to complete the update process is less than 5 minutes. Proceed with update?” You must select **YES** to install the update on your analyzer.

Please contact the Opus Help Desk at 1- 866-OBD-TEST (623-8378) or email Opus Inspection at NYVIP3Info@Opusinspection.com if you have any questions or need additional assistance.

NYVIP MESSAGE No. 309

DATE: 10/24/2024

TO: ALL INSPECTION STATIONS

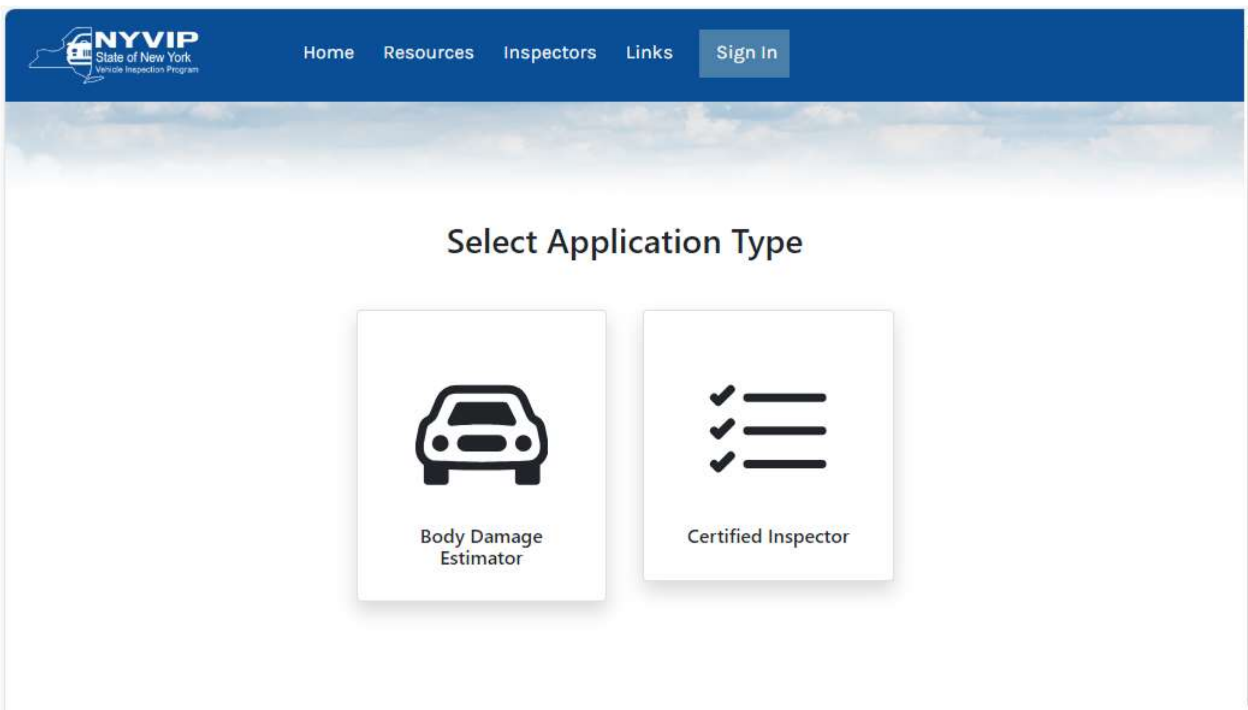
FROM: NYS DEPT. OF MOTOR VEHICLES

SUBJECT: CERTIFIED INSPECTOR APPLICATION AND RENEWAL ONLINE

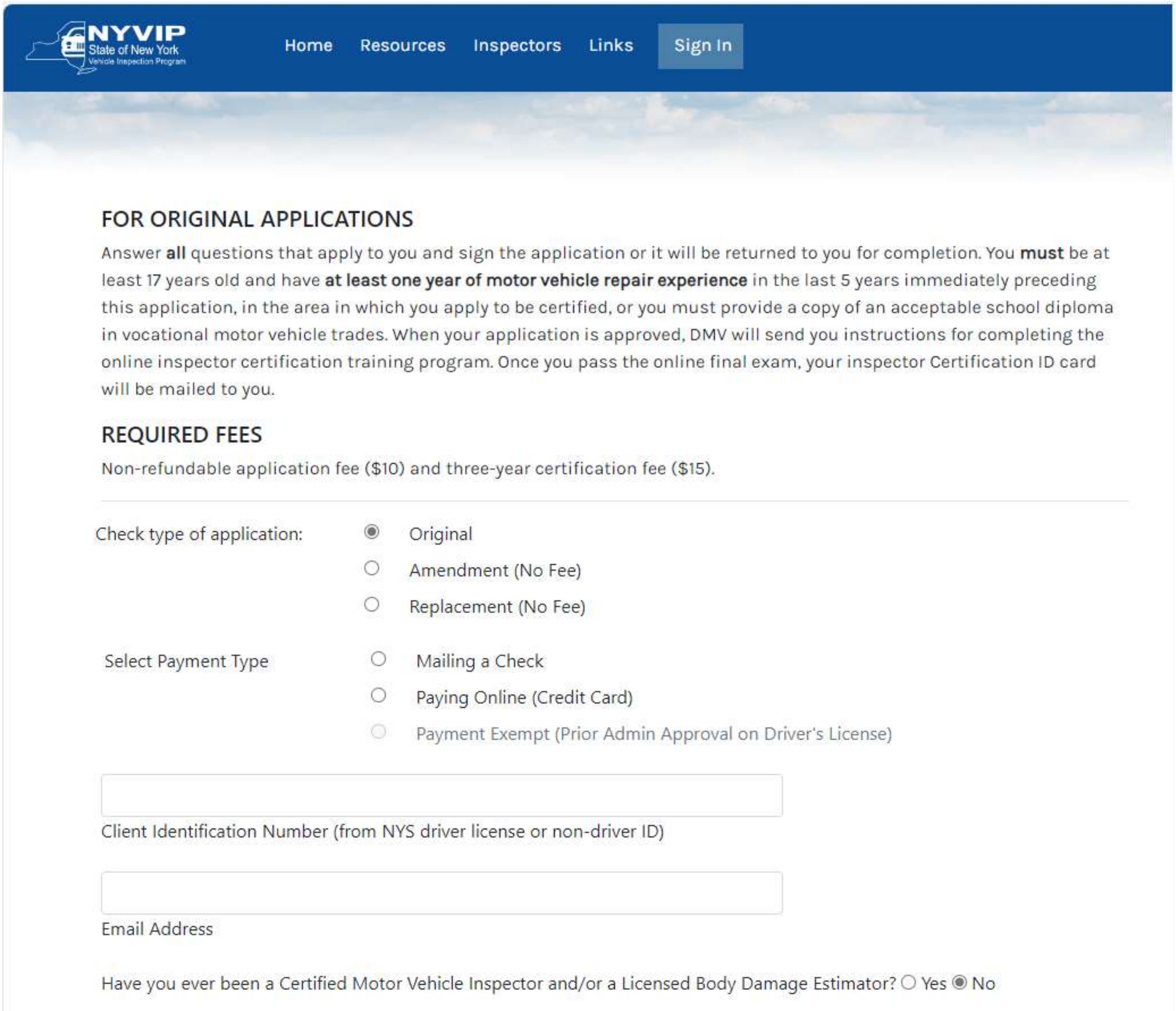
*****PLEASE BRING THIS MESSAGE TO THE ATTENTION OF THE STATION OWNER AND/OR MANAGER*****

The Department of Motor Vehicles, in conjunction with Opus Inspection Inc., has developed and is happy to announce the launch of the fully online Certified Inspector and Body Damage Estimator license application system. This system will provide over fifty thousand licensed inspectors and body damage estimators a more convenient and efficient way to renew their license and for new applicants to apply.

The NYVIP3 public website now provides functionality to manage Certified Inspector or Body Damage Estimator licenses at [www.NYVIP3.com.](http://www.NYVIP3.com) Existing or prospective Certified Inspector or Body Damage Estimators can access appropriate application forms under the Inspectors menu option.



The system will guide users through a series of prompts designed to direct the candidate to the most appropriate application type. The online original, amendment, renewal, and replacement application forms provide a faster, modernized method for submitting your application information to the Department of Motor Vehicles. Candidates will supply the same information previously provided via the paper-based mail in form through a web-based application. The application includes the ability to pay application fees via credit card in real-time.



NYVIP State of New York Vehicle Inspection Program

Home Resources Inspectors Links Sign In

FOR ORIGINAL APPLICATIONS

Answer **all** questions that apply to you and sign the application or it will be returned to you for completion. You **must** be at least 17 years old and have **at least one year of motor vehicle repair experience** in the last 5 years immediately preceding this application, in the area in which you apply to be certified, or you must provide a copy of an acceptable school diploma in vocational motor vehicle trades. When your application is approved, DMV will send you instructions for completing the online inspector certification training program. Once you pass the online final exam, your inspector Certification ID card will be mailed to you.

REQUIRED FEES

Non-refundable application fee ($10) and three-year certification fee ($15).

Check type of application: Original / Amendment (No Fee) / Replacement (No Fee)

Select Payment Type: Mailing a Check / Paying Online (Credit Card) / Payment Exempt (Prior Admin Approval on Driver's License)

Client Identification Number (from NYS driver license or non-driver ID)

Email Address

Have you ever been a Certified Motor Vehicle Inspector and/or a Licensed Body Damage Estimator? Yes No

Submitted web-based applications are immediately available for review by Department of Motor Vehicles staff. The new system reduces wait time for application submittal results by eliminating mailing and processing time, allowing Certified Inspectors and Body Damage Estimators to receive their new or renewed license more quickly.

This system was designed to make the application process easier, faster, and more efficient.

If you require any assistance with the new online system please contact the Certified Inspector Unit at 518-474-7998 option 1.

NYVIP MESSAGE No. 310

DATE: 10/28/2024

TO: ALL INSPECTION STATIONS

FROM: OPUS INSPECTION

SUBJECT: 2026 STICKER STOCK SHIPMENTS & RIBBON REPLACEMENT

****PLEASE PRINT A COPY OF THIS MESSAGE AND DELIVER IT TO THE PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR VEHICLE INSPECTION EQUIPMENT****

NYVIP3 2026 Sticker Stock Shipments and Ribbon Replacement Notice

Sticker Printer Ribbon Replacement Alert: If your sticker printer ribbon has not been replaced in the last 12 months, regardless of use, you must replace it. You must purchase a replacement ribbon from Opus at www.NYVIP3.com. Using any other ribbon than those supplied by Opus will cause print quality and degradation issues. Refer to your Station Participation Agreement Page 3 Section 2 Warranty Services: "All consumables and replacement parts, must be purchased from Opus. Excluded from the warranty are the following parts and consumables: Toner/Drum Cartridge (Vehicle Inspection Report (VIR) Printer), Ribbon (Sticker Printer)".

We recommend replacing the ribbon when loading the 2026 sticker stock. Follow the steps below to order a new ribbon from the Opus website:

1. Visit www.NYVIP3.com and log in using your Facility ID and password.
2. Hover over "My Account" and select "Purchase Equipment."
3. Scroll down and select "Add V300 Resin Ribbon," then proceed to the shopping cart.
4. Complete your payment and shipping information to finalize your order.

2026 expiration sticker stock: Opus Inspection began shipping Gray 2026 expiration sticker stock to active NYVIP3 inspection stations on October 23rd, 2024. This process will continue through the second week of December. There is no need to request the 2026 sticker stock, as it will be automatically shipped via FedEx based on your station's license type(s) and, where possible, historical inspection volume. At a minimum, you will receive enough sticker stock for the first quarter of 2025, and in some cases, for the full calendar year.

Once you receive the 2026 sticker stock, please ensure that the stock type, quantity, and serial numbers on the receipt match the items received. If any discrepancies are found, contact Opus immediately at **(866) OBD-TEST (866-623-8378).**

Important Reminders:

- You are required to enter all sticker stock serial numbers into your Computerized Vehicle Inspection System (CVIS) immediately upon receipt.
- You must store the 2026 sticker stock securely. Do not load the 2026 sticker stock into the CVIS sticker printer before **January 1, 2025**.

- Any damaged or voided NYVIP3 sticker stock must be kept at your station for auditing by NY DMV personnel.
- Unused 2025 sticker stock must be returned to Opus at 7 Kripes Road, East Granby, CT 06026, by **March 1, 2025**. Additional details and a return form will be provided in a future message.

Opus will use the email address provided during your NYVIP3 registration for all communications regarding order tracking, sticker shipments, and other updates. It is the responsibility of the **station manager or owner** to keep this information up to date. If you do not receive an email with your tracking details, please contact Opus to update your contact information.

Thank you for your continued participation in the New York Vehicle Inspection Program.

IRS Provides Free Nov. 18 Webinar on Compliance Assurance Process to Help Large Businesses

The Internal Revenue Service will offer a free webinar to help large business taxpayers understand the Compliance Assurance Process (CAP) by discussing updates and clarifications to the program to better prepare applicants.

The CAP helps large corporate taxpayers improve federal tax compliance through real-time issue resolution tools that promote accurate tax returns and shorten the IRS examination process.
The webinar will take place from 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. ET on Monday, Nov. 18, 2024. Those who are interested can register on the CAP program webinar registration page. Space is limited to the first 1,000 registrants.

In response to questions concerning the changes to the eligibility requirements for the CAP program, the IRS is providing some clarifications.

To be eligible to apply for CAP, applicants must:

- Have assets of $10 million or more,
- Be a U.S. publicly traded C-corporation with a legal requirement to prepare and submit SEC Forms 10-K, 10-Q, and 8-K or a U.S. privately held C-corporation including foreign owned.
  - U.S. privately held C-corporations will be required to timely submit audited financial statements prepared in accordance with U.S. Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP), International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) or another permissible method, as deemed appropriate by the IRS, specific to the taxpayer applying to the CAP program on an annual basis and unaudited financial statements on a quarterly basis.
- Not be under investigation by, or in litigation with, any government agency that would limit the IRS's access to current tax records.

As a new exception, taxpayers will be eligible for the CAP program if they have a tax return that remains open due to outstanding Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and/or Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors Act (CHIPS) tax issues.

Taxpayers may apply for the 2025 CAP program until Oct. 31, 2024. The IRS will inform applicants if they're accepted into the program in February 2025.

To prepare new applicants for the CAP program, the IRS will assist taxpayers in meeting the eligibility requirements. Taxpayers currently under IRS examination and possibly not meeting the current eligibility criteria are encouraged to discuss their interest in CAP with their local IRS team or by sending an email to the CAP mailbox found on the CAP webpage.

Launched in 2005, CAP employs real-time issue resolution through transparent and cooperative interaction between taxpayers and the IRS to improve federal tax compliance by resolving issues prior to the filing of a tax return.

To learn more, visit the CAP FAQ webpage.