

The lower end of the range assumes that prices within a PADD increased to reflect the highest operating cost increase faced by any refiner in that PADD. In this case, this refiner with the highest operating cost would not recover any of his invested capital, but all other refiners would recover some or all of their investment. In this case, the price of nonroad, locomotive and marine diesel fuel would increase in 2007 by 1–2 cents per gallon, depending on the area of the country. In 2010, the price of nonroad diesel fuel would increase a total of 2–3 cents per gallon. Locomotive and marine diesel fuel prices would continue to increase by 1–2 cents per gallon.

The mid-range estimate of price impacts assumes that prices within a PADD increase by the average refining and distribution cost within that PADD, including full recovery of capital (at 7 percent per annum before taxes). Lower cost refiners would recover more than their capital investment, while those with higher than average costs recover less. Under this assumption, the price of nonroad, locomotive and marine diesel fuel would increase in 2007 by 2–4 cents per gallon, depending on the area of the country. In 2010, the price of nonroad diesel fuel would increase a total of 3–9 cents per gallon. Locomotive and marine diesel fuel prices would continue to increase by 2–4 cents per gallon.

The upper end estimate of price impacts assumes that prices within a PADD increase by the maximum total refining and distribution cost of any refinery within that PADD, including full recovery of capital (at 7 percent per annum before taxes). All other refiners would recover more than their capital investment. Under this assumption, the price of nonroad, locomotive and marine diesel fuel would increase in 2007 by 3–6 cents per gallon, depending on the area of the country. In 2010, the price of nonroad diesel fuel would increase a total of 5–9 cents per gallon. Locomotive and marine diesel fuel prices would continue to increase by 3–6 cents per gallon.

In addition to the differences noted above, there are a number of assumptions inherent in all three of the above price projections. First, both the lower and upper limits of the projected price impacts described above assume that the refinery facing the highest compliance costs is currently the price setter in their market. This is a worse case assumption which is impossible to validate. Many factors affect a refinery's total costs of fuel production. Most of these factors, such as crude oil cost, labor costs, age of equipment, etc., are

not considered in projecting the incremental costs associated with lower NRLM diesel fuel sulfur levels. Thus, current prices may very well be set in any specific market by a refinery facing lower incremental compliance costs than other refineries. This point was highlighted in a study by the National Economic Research Associates (NERA) for AAM of the potential price impacts of EPA's 2007 highway diesel fuel program.²⁸⁶ In that study, NERA criticized the above referenced study performed by Charles River Associates, *et al.* for API, which projected that prices would increase nationwide to reflect the total cost faced by the U.S. refinery with the maximum total compliance cost of all the refineries in the U.S. producing highway diesel fuel. To reflect the potential that the refinery with the highest projected compliance costs under the maximum price scenario is not the current price setter, we included the mid-point price impacts above. It is possible that even the lower limit price impacts are too high, if the conditions exist where prices are set based on operating costs alone. However, these price impacts are sufficiently low that considering even lower price impacts was not considered critical to estimating the potential economic impact of this rule.

Second, we assumed that a single refinery's costs could affect fuel prices throughout an entire PADD. While this is a definite improvement over analyses which assume that a single refinery's costs could affect fuel prices throughout the entire nation, it is still conservative. High cost refineries are more likely to have a more limited geographical impact on market pricing than an entire PADD.

Third, by focusing solely on the cost of desulfurizing NRLM diesel fuel, we assume that the production of NRLM diesel fuel is independent of the production of other refining products, such as gasoline, jet fuel and highway diesel fuel. However, this is clearly not the case. Refiners have some flexibility to increase the production of one product without significantly affecting the others, but this flexibility is quite limited. It is possible that the relative economics of producing other products could influence a refiner's decision to increase or decrease the production of NRLM diesel fuel under the proposed standards. This in turn could increase or decrease the price impact relative to those projected above.

Fourth, all three of the above price projections are based on the projected cost for U.S. refineries of meeting the proposed NRLM diesel fuel sulfur caps. Thus, these price projections assume that imports of NRLM fuel, which are currently significant in the Northeast, are available at roughly the same cost as those for U.S. refineries in PADDs 1 and 3. We have not performed any analysis of the cost of lower sulfur caps on diesel fuel produced by foreign refiners. However, there are reasons to believe that imports of 500 and 15 ppm NRLM diesel fuel would be available at prices in the ranges of those projected for U.S. refiners.

One recent study analyzed the relative cost of lower sulfur caps for Asian refiners relative to those in the U.S., Europe and Japan.²⁸⁷ It concluded that costs for Asian refiners would be comparatively higher, due to the lack of current hydrotreating capacity at Asian refineries. This conclusion is certainly valid when evaluating lower sulfur levels for highway diesel fuels which are already at low levels in the U.S., Europe and Japan and for which refineries in these areas have already invested in hydrotreating capacity. It would appear to be less valid when assessing the relative cost of meeting lower sulfur standards for nonroad diesel fuels and heating oils which are currently at much higher sulfur levels in the U.S., Europe and Japan. All refineries face additional investments to remove sulfur from these fuels and so face roughly comparable control costs on a per gallon basis.

One factor arguing for competitively priced imports is the fact that refinery utilization rates are currently higher in the U.S. and Europe than in the rest of the world. The primary issue is whether overseas refiners will invest to meet tight sulfur standards for U.S., European and Japanese markets. Many overseas refiners will not invest, instead focusing on local, higher sulfur markets. However, many overseas refiners focus on exports. Both Europe and the U.S. are moving towards highway and nonroad diesel fuel sulfur caps in the 10–15 ppm range. Europe is currently and projected to continue to need to import large volumes of highway diesel fuel. Thus, it seems reasonable to expect that a number of overseas refiners would invest in the capacity to produce some or all of their diesel fuel at these levels. Overseas refiners also have the flexibility to produce 10–15 ppm diesel fuel from their cleanest blendstocks, as

²⁸⁶ "Potential Impacts of Environmental Regulations on Diesel Fuel Prices," NERA, for AAM, December 2000.

²⁸⁷ "Cost of Diesel Fuel Desulfurization In Asian Refineries," Estrada International Ltd., for the Asian Development Bank, December 17, 2002.