

Govt won't close fake fuel dealers, says UNBS

Lusaka. The body says it has warned the dealers to encourage them to comply with the required standards.

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KAMPALA. Government has said it will not close fuel stations dealing in adulterated products until they commit another offence of similar nature.

Yesterday, government issued warning to more than 100 fuel stations over selling adulterated fuel, saying their products put motorists at risk.

Despite the danger posed, the Uganda National Bureau of Standards said such fuel stations will remain operational.

"The public warning is one of the ways to encourage compliance. Revoking licence will happen if they repeat the offence," Mr Godwin Bongu Muhwezi, the UNBS spokesperson, said yesterday in a telephone interview.

Adulterated fuel is where inferior quality products such as kerosene are added to petrol.

Mr Muhwezi said although the fuel that enters the country is clean, all the other substances are added by the dealers at the storage facilities and the fuel stations.

"We do check fuel when its entering the country, but we suspect it is adulterated at the point of storage," Mr

Muhwezi said. "In conjunction with Energy ministry, we do routine fuel marking across the country and it is the result of this that has exposed the adulterated fuel. We do it daily and compile regular reports on the quality," he added.

Fuel dealers have responded to the list of stations accused of selling adulterated products with anger, saying both UNBS and Ministry of Energy are insincere. Mr Dan Mugarura, the Oryx Bukoto dealer, blamed UNBS, saying his fuel station has complied with all the requirements.

Dealers cry foul

Mr Mugarura said officials from both the Energy ministry and UNBS visited his station last month and carried out inspection, before issuing him with a certificate of compliance.

"I am selling fuel which has been certified by the UNBS and nobody is talking about it except the newspapers. Even Ministry of Energy has not contacted me and I have just seen a document [story] in the *Daily Monitor* quoting the Ministry of Energy officials and I do not know whether it is true or not," he said.

Mr Mugarura also wondered why the ministry has chosen to run to the media instead of raising the issue with the companies.

"I thought UNBS and Energy [ministry] have the authority to reprimand because if someone sells adulterated fuel, I think that it is a criminal activity, so if they have discovered that



Sensitisation. A laboratory technician shows staff of Vivo Energy how adulterated fuel can be detected. PHOTO BY RACHEL MAMBA

someone is selling adulterated fuel, why don't they take them to court?" he asked.

However, Mr Laurence Amitingo, the director FAL Petrol Station in Arua District, admitted receiving a communication from the UNBS about

their fuel being adulterated.

He said they learnt of the problem early this year when the officials went to do inspections.

Mr Amitingo said Oryx Energies Uganda has been supplying them with fuel.

FAKE FUELS

Adulterated fuels are those that are contaminated or whose quality has been weakened by adding inferior quality products. It involves adding kerosene or diesel to petrol. Globally, at least 70 per cent of drivers and mechanics have experienced this problem mostly in petrol engines.

"We normally buy our fuel from Oryx and occasionally from Kenya. I do not think that information is true that our fuel is adulterated," he said.

Attempts to get clarifications from Mr Peter Businge, the managing director Oryx Energies Uganda, about the quality of fuel they supply to other vendors were futile because he was reported to be out of office.

The company runs a fuel depot on Plot 160 - 6th Street - Industrial Area, in Kampala.

Effects

Mr Muhwezi said it is difficult to spot whether fuel has been adulterated or not.

"You will only realise when your engine has a knock, or when an engine, especially the latest models reject the fuels, then mechanics can come in and remove the fuel," he said.

The adulteration leads to engine failures and malfunctions, compromising safety on the roads, particularly among the latest models of cars.

There are also increased emissions, of hydrocarbons, carbon monoxide, oxides of nitrogen and particulate. Kerosene mixed with petrol results in higher emissions because they do not form a uniform mixture leading to incomplete combustion.

Experts say the high levels of sulphur in kerosene compromises the conversion properties of engine pollutants on the catalysts leading to engine deposit formation.