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## State gas prices spiking again, as war strains energy markets

**'I'M PINCHED' | \$5-a-gallon premium returns, as Washington's average gasoline price rises 15% from a month ago.**

By **JESSICA FU**  
*Seattle Times business reporter*

Seattle-area drivers are agonizing over gas prices, which climbed rapidly over the past week in response to global supply chain disruptions.

The ongoing war in the Middle East has cut off oil shipments from

the Persian Gulf, driving prices up across the globe.

On Monday, both the U.S. and international benchmark prices for crude oil reached nearly \$120 a barrel, before falling back to under \$90 a barrel later in the day, reported the Associated Press. The U.S. benchmark price for crude oil was

below \$70 a barrel before the U.S. and Israel struck Iran on Feb. 28. Crude oil is a resource that gets refined into gasoline used in cars, as well as other petroleum-based products.

For Washingtonians, the recent increases compound already-high local pump prices, which reflect the state's gas tax and higher costs of labor and distribution.

On Monday, the average price of regular gas was \$4.63 per gallon in Washington, up 15% from one month ago, according to fuel price

**DISRUPTION** in Strait of Hormuz sends cost of crude oil higher > **Business, A11**

data published by AAA. In the Seattle, Bellevue and Everett area, the average was \$4.814 per gallon; the national average was \$3.478 per gallon.

"At this point, I can't even get a full tank without breaking my budget," said Gracie Morris on Monday, outside a Shell gas station in

See > **GAS PRICES, A6**

## President sends conflicting messages on war in Iran

By **THOMAS FULLER, RICHARD PEREZ-PENA, FARNAZ FASSIHI AND AARON BOXERMAN**  
*The New York Times*

**JERUSALEM** — On a day when the fighting in the Middle East sent tremors through global markets, President Donald Trump offered contradictory signals about the war, suggesting that it could be ending "soon" and then a few hours later leaving the timing open-ended.

Trump first said the war was "very complete, pretty much" during a phone interview Monday with a CBS News reporter. "We're very far ahead of schedule," he added.

Oil prices and stocks swung wildly all day, as investors appeared preoccupied by the lack of a clear offramp for the fighting, which has disrupted a significant share of the world's oil, gas and fertilizer exports.

But markets, which had plummeted in the early hours of U.S. trading, rebounded Monday afternoon with Trump's comment that the war was close to complete. The price of oil dropped.

Then, after markets closed for the day, Trump made a series of comments that moved in another direction. He told a gathering of Republican lawmakers in Florida that "we have won in many ways, but not enough."

"We go forward more determined than ever to achieve ultimate victory that will end this

See > **IRAN, A5**

## Seattle 911 triage: Send an ambulance or an Uber?



ILLUSTRATION BY JENNIFER LUXTON / THE SEATTLE TIMES

By **DANIEL BEEKMAN**  
*Seattle Times staff reporter*

**TIMES WATCHDOG**

**911 SERVICES | In 2022, Seattle started using the Nurse Navigation program, which filters callers based on the perceived need.**

**M**ore than 1,000 times in a year, someone in Seattle may dial 911 for an ambulance to the hospital and get picked up by an Uber instead.

Proponents say these rides can save patients money and ease pressure on ambulances. Skeptics say they may pose risks for patients and drivers.

The rides have been happening since February 2022, when the city partnered with its private ambulance contractor to launch a 911 nurse line.

Rather than send aid to all 911 medical callers, the Fire Department's 911 dispatchers now transfer some patients to nurses at a call center in Texas.

The Nurse Navigation program, operated by American Medical Response's parent company, is designed to reduce strain on ambulances and hospitals by diverting people with minor problems to options like clinics and self-care.

But there are gaps in Seattle's setup, The Seattle Times recently showed by investigating the case of a woman named Pamela Hogan, who waited 10 hours for an ambulance ordered through the nurse line and never got care.

Ride-share vehicles are part of the picture, as well, because the nurses sometimes order one of those rather than an ambulance. Among about 7,400 calls transferred from Seattle's 911 center to Nurse Navigation in 2024, 14% resulted in ride-share rides to hospital emergency rooms, according to AMR.

AMR pays for the ride-share transports and says they're a good option for people who don't really need ambulance rides, which can be costly.

Uber drivers can sometimes reach patients quicker than ambulance crews can, said Fire Department Lt. Charles Hubschman, a 911 dispatcher. Seattle added AMR's nurse line partly because ambulances were getting backed up.

The nurses order the ride-share vehicles only for patients who agree, AMR says, citing the example of someone headed to the hospital with a broken finger.

The most common medical problems for ride-share transports in Seattle in 2024 included abdominal pain, leg pain and anxiety issues, according to AMR, which is using the ride-share option for patients in other cities across the country.

These rides are basically the same as when people hail a ride

See > **911, A6**

## State judges say threats against them at all-time high

By **MIKE CARTER**  
*Seattle Times staff reporter*

The rule of law is protected by a thin, black-robed line, and it's in trouble.

That's according to experienced judges in Washington, who say threats against the judiciary are at an all-time high, fed by a presidential administration that vilifies dissent and scoffs at the separation of powers.

A trio of judges from both sides of the Cascades spoke on the issue at a town hall Wednesday night at the offices of the law firm K&L Gates, where security was tighter than that in many Washington courthouses.

In Stevens County, for instance, there are no deputies or marshals to protect judges. If something amiss happens in a courtroom, the judge has to call 911. The same holds true in Adams County.

In Spokane County, a single deputy is responsible for the security of 13 judges, who all use the same parking area, making them easy to isolate.

In many other counties, the security measures in courthouses,

See > **THREATS, A6**

**FERGUSON** appoints Seattle lawyer to Supreme Court > **A8**

## With an app and a prayer, he survived 4 hours in avalanche

By **CARLY DYKES**  
*Special to The Seattle Times*

Michael Harris set out for a day at Stevens Pass last month. A 21-year regular at the ski area and a lifelong skier, he knew the terrain, understood the risks and had done enough sidcountry skiing over the years to understand what avalanche country looked like.

But on a Thursday afternoon in

late February, something unexpected happened.

While skiing a popular run on the south side of Stevens Pass, Harris was buried beneath several feet of avalanche debris. He was alone, without a beacon and, by most statistical measures of avalanche survival, the odds were stacked against him.

He is alive still because of his

wife, Penny Harris. Using a feature on her husband's cellphone to find him, Penny was able to initiate a rescue after Michael had been trapped in snow for several hours.

"She was the lead rescuer," he said. "She was going to make sure they found me."

Penny and Michael have been married 30 years — high school sweethearts from neighboring

schools in Southern California, together since their early 20s. The pair now live in Bothell. They celebrated their anniversary in Hawai'i in January, just weeks before Penny would make the drive up Highway 2 that saved Michael's life.

"He's my person," Penny said.

The backside of Stevens Pass had been closed for the majority of a

See > **SKIER, A6**

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