AAA: Falling gas prices fuel holiday travel

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SENECA — Cheryl Miller of Walhalla doesn't know why gasoline prices have dropped in recent weeks or how long they'll stay under $2, but she plans to enjoy paying less while it lasts.

Miller stopped Friday to fill up her red Toyota RAV4 at the Bountyland Exxon in Seneca, where the price for a gallon of regular unleaded was at $1.99 Friday.

"I hope these prices stay with us, because it sure helps the family budget," Miller said. "Why they've been dropping, I haven't a clue."

Over the next couple days, Americans will be paying the lowest gasoline prices for a Labor Day weekend in more than 10 years, according to AAA Carolinas. Currently, the national average for a gallon of regular stands at $2.42, down eight cents from a week ago, 22 cents less than last month and $1.01 cheaper than a year ago.

Locally and throughout the state, the average price for regular is $1.99 per gallon. At this time a year ago, South Carolina motorists were paying about $3.17 per gallon for regular.

Crude prices continue to fluctuate between $40 and $45 a barrel, which is well below historical highs of more than $100 per barrel.

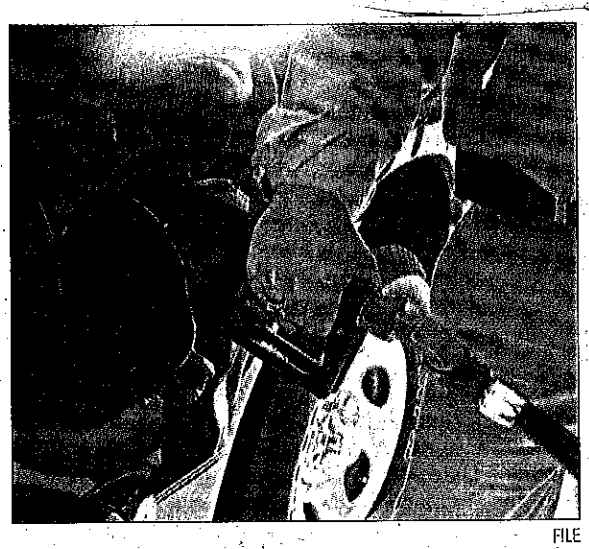
Despite the drop in crude prices, Saudi Arabia and other big oil producers have not moved to cut their production, which is helping to keep gasoline prices down.

The price of crude closed at $45.79 a barrel Friday.

The combination of lower gas prices and an improving economy will translate to approximately 1.5 million Carolinians driving 50 miles or more over the Labor Day weekend, AAA predicts.

"It's unbelievable that drivers are ending their summer vacations with the lowest gasoline prices since 2004," AAA spokesman Michael Green said.

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Gas prices throughout the country are at their lowest for a Labor Day weekend in more than a decade, according to numbers released this week by AAA Carolinas.