

The [American Supply Association \(ASA\)](#) and its [Industrial Piping Division \(IPD\)](#) is the national organization serving wholesaler-distributors and their suppliers in the industrial and mechanical pipe-valve-fitting industry. As a powerful alliance of channel partners, we provide a forum for your upstream trading partners to exchange critical information and address key issues.

In particular, ASA's IPD members constantly check the pulse of the materials and commodities they proudly supply to you. ASA's IPD members are knowledgeable industry leaders, and those who volunteer their service on the IPD Executive Council compile and prepare the *IPD Commodity Reports*. The *Reports* contain some of the most current and qualified market data and information available from the industry's leading manufacturers and distributors about emerging trends and other price-influencing actions and events.

This information is an example of how ASA's IPD manufacturer and distributor [members](#) are constantly looking ahead to ensure you have information and resources you need to be successful. Learn more at www.asa.net.

Oil and Fuel Outlook

At the time of writing, a verbal peace deal between the US and Iran was in the works that would potentially reopen the Strait of Hormuz. Iranian "officials" were signaling that they would allow non-combat ships to move through the Strait of Hormuz. This was positive news, and the markets were reacting at the time positively. This was having a sharp near-term impact on oil prices and was helping to push them off of their recent highs (at one point futures had hit \$119 a barrel).

West Texas Intermediate (WTI) was obviously much higher month-over-month at the time of writing, but as mentioned, prices were beginning to ease. Oil was trading at \$87.18 (\$66.58 a barrel in last month's report), which is now 51.69% higher year-to-date and it was 26.23% higher vs. this time last year (5.67% lower last month).

But again, prices were falling quickly at the time of writing on news that Iran would allow "non-threatening" ships to transit the Strait of Hormuz, analysts were speculating that this could be the "beginning of the end" of the impact on the Strait. Brent North Sea Crude was falling at a slower speed and remained significantly higher at \$98.69 (\$71.84 a barrel last month). This was up 62% YTD and was 35% higher over the past 12 months.

Fuel prices were obviously much higher this month as well. Diesel prices were higher at \$5.36 a gallon at the time of writing (\$3.73 a gallon in the last briefing) (Source: AAA) and were \$1.77 per gallon higher than last year. Gasoline was also sharply higher at \$3.98 a gallon (\$2.95 per gallon in last month's briefing), which is 76 cents per gallon higher than last year (16 cents lower last month).

The EIA's latest forecast for 2026 crude oil prices moved up sharply this month because of the Middle East conflict and closure of the Strait. For 2026, the EIA has pushed the forecast up — oil prices are expected to hit \$73.61 (\$53.42 a barrel in the last forecast and against the 2025 average of \$65.40). Prices are expected to average \$72.60 in Q1, \$84.56 in Q2, \$71.45 in Q3, and \$66.00 in Q4 2026. The EIA is acknowledging the risk posed in the Strait of Hormuz and potential subsequent conflict with Iran but continues to keep the overall forecast modest on a historical basis.

For refined fuels, the gasoline price forecast shows them also higher in 2026, rising to \$3.34 per gallon (\$2.91 last month and against the full-year average of \$3.10 in 2025). Prices will average \$3.11 in Q1, \$3.72 in Q2, \$3.42 in Q3, and \$3.11 in Q4 of 2026. Retail diesel prices as reported by the EIA show them averaging \$4.12 in 2026 and \$3.78 in 2027 after averaging \$3.66 in 2025. Prices are expected to average \$3.91 in Q1, \$4.54 in Q2, \$4.12 in Q3, and \$3.92 in Q4 of 2026.

The EIA showed that 2025 full year daily crude oil production came in at 13.60 Mbpd (million barrels per day) and it is now showing production unchanged at 13.61 bpd in 2026 (13.60 in the last update). For 2027, it expects production to fall to now increase to 13.83 Mbpd. This forecast was issued after the start of the Middle East Conflict.

Total commercial inventories ended 2025 at 1.300 billion. Once again, this month, the EIA now has them modestly rising to an average of 1.314 billion barrels in 2026 (from 1.321 billion barrels in the last forecast) and 1.337 in 2027 (1.336 in the last forecast). These remain near historic highs, and this higher inventory relationship continues to put pressure on production if these levels are maintained. Again, the unknown in the equation is how much US crude will be consumed elsewhere while the Middle East conflict continues. Although data is limited, some ports are reporting modest upticks in US exports since the conflict started.

What ASA PVF Distributors Are Saying

Each month ASA and the Industrial Piping Division ask distributors doing business in the industrial and mechanical PVF sector for their thoughts on current conditions and trends they are seeing:

“March has been a bounce-back month for us commercially. Strong sales in for projects in steam and hot water categories are leading the charge this month. We are on pace to exceed our forecasted budgets for PVF sales this month if things continue at this rate.”

“Our market conditions are rather robust. There are colleges, hospital expansions/additions, data centers and port superstructures in our market. The projects mentioned are spread out and in different phases of development, from just-purchased land to topping out projects. Indications that some work will continue for two or three years. Last year was our second-best year ever and we are ahead of that.”

“The challenges I see ahead for these huge data centers is manpower. One of our largest customers was asked to look at one of these data centers and realized it would take as many workers as they have on several of their ongoing projects combined! They declined. Our opportunities are filling in the holes with our extensive inventory. We are hear and we’ll likely have it. We have heard from peers in the industry that these “bones” equate to millions of dollars, so there’s that.”

“Our sales are up (New England and upstate New York wholesaler). We were plus-22% on 2025 MTD March sales. March has been our best orders-booked month in our history. Jobs are EPCs, power plants and data centers. Both the industrial and mechanical PVF markets are extremely busy at present. The tariff conundrum needs to be solved and the war in Iran is certainly a concern. We’re seeing continued strong activity for the entire second quarter.”

Carbon Steel Update

The month of March has seen carbon steel prices reach their highest point of the last 15 months. Limited spot-delivery availability and fewer import options have contributed to these increases. It should be noted that while the prices have risen to 2026-highs, the increase represents relatively modest climbs of 6% over the year’s low quote.

While these hot-rolled coil prices have elevated, landed costs of carbon steel pipe have remained steady. As a buyer, I would remain close to those numbers and recommend continued vigilance. Many domestic steel and pipe mills plan for maintenance downtime starting Q2 so that will further tighten inventory and could put upward pressure on finished goods.

Stainless / Brass

The ongoing conflict in the Middle East continues to disrupt global shipping lanes, extending transit times by about three weeks as vessels reroute around Africa. This has driven higher freight costs, with war-risk surcharges now being implemented and container rates in some cases doubling over the past 45 days.

Fuel and energy costs have also risen sharply, with oil prices up over 70% since January, significantly increasing production costs for global manufacturers. At the same time, strong demand — particularly from data center construction — continues to pressure supply, contributing to sustained increases in stainless steel pricing, which are generally in the high single digits to double digits (approximately 8%–20% depending on product category).

Brass products are also facing continued headwinds, as copper prices remain stable at historically high levels. In response, several major manufacturers have announced price increases ranging from 10% to 20% across brass product categories.

Stainless Steel Fittings Update

The market for stainless fittings has remained steady for pricing, but inventory of specific sizes for data centers has been strained as construction has ramped up considerably. The conflict in Iran has affected energy prices throughout the world and shows the vulnerability of that region to all countries dependent on Middle East oil and gas resources.

Copper

The copper Comex closed March 23rd at \$5.4395 which is up \$0.097 from the previous Friday's close.

The Comex average year-to-date price is at \$5.8245 per pound and the LME is \$0.04640 above the Comex average year-to-date price.

Plastics has seen some higher pricing in raw material.

We haven't seen it go into the market yet.

Transportation and packaging costs have gone up as well.

Carbon Steel Weld Fittings and Flanges

The escalation with the war in Iran has caused LNG rationing in countries like India. India is one of the largest producers of carbon steel flanges in the world. This has caused the price of billets to rise about 15%. It is also causing delays in production times because the mills can't run their furnaces at full capacity. This will cause delays in lead times.

It has also caused excess cost in container shipping. Since the containers can't sail through the Strait of Hormuz, this is causing them to sail around the tip of Africa which costs more and takes longer to get to the United States.

Cast-Iron

McWane (Tyler Pipe) and Charlotte Pipe and Foundry have not announced any price changes or updates for the month of March.