A DECISION COMPANION

When a world shock reaches your invoice

A higher oil price can be real. The explanation for a particular surcharge still needs to be tested.



Conceptual illustration. See source and provenance notes.

01 Follow the chain from the input to the final price.

02 Separate volume, unit price and fixed charges.

03 Ask what makes the surcharge end.

Companion to the complete WTM article. A practical synthesis, not personalised financial, legal, medical or safety advice.

A price travels through decisions

Do not apply the percentage change in crude oil to every item in the household budget.

01
Crude oil
Benchmark and supply

→

02
Transport
Freight, route, insurance

→

03
Refining
Capacity and product mix

→

04
Local market
Currency, tax, competition

→

05
Contract
Timing and pass-through

→

06
Your bill
Units, rate, fixed fees



Conceptual illustration. See source and provenance notes.

Keep observations and forecasts apart

Observed: EIA reported a 4.8 million-barrel-a-day fall in refinery inputs in Q2 2026, then a 1.8 million rebound in Q3.

EIA, 10 November: Brent averaged US$124 a barrel in October. Its forecast is about US$100 in November and December, assuming continuing flow constraints. Neither is a guaranteed pump price.

Sources: EIA refinery analysis, 3 November 2026; EIA outlook, 10 November 2026. Past monthly prices and conditional forecasts are distinct.

A larger total is not always a higher price

Illustrative calculations. Use the actual quantities, dates and terms on your own bill.



Conceptual illustration. See source and provenance notes.

THE SAME FUEL, THE SAME VOLUME

40 litres × £1.50 = £60
40 litres × £1.65 = £66

The unit price rose 10%. Holding volume constant, the bill rose £6. If the household also drove further, the extra volume is a separate cause.

COST-SHARE TEST

10% of costs × a 20% fuel rise = about 2%

All else equal. This is a rough input-cost calculation, not a legal cap or a prediction of the supplier's price.

These examples are hypothetical. Currency changes, other inputs, contracts and margins can alter the final outcome.

Five questions for a surcharge

Ask for an explanation that can be checked. Do not assume that incomplete detail proves wrongdoing.

01 **What changed?**
Name the input and the dated evidence.

02 **How is it calculated?**
Which part of the service depends on that input?

03 **What period does it cover?**
Check the billing period and contractual timing.

04 **When is it reviewed?**
Ask for the next review date, not a vague promise.

05 **What would make it fall?**
Check whether the formula works in both directions.



Conceptual illustration. See source and provenance notes.

Keep the invoice and the supplier's reply. Any consumer-rights or complaint route must be checked for the applicable jurisdiction.

Relief should reach the people with few options

Households cannot choose the global price of energy. They can compare explanations, while governments choose who receives support.

NEXT ACTION

For the household

Keep a simple record: old and new unit price, quantity, fixed fees, date and stated reason.

Compare like for like before changing a budget or challenging a bill.

TRUST CONDITION

For the supplier

Explain the formula and review date in ordinary language.

If the trigger unwinds, show whether and when the surcharge changes.

DISTRIBUTION TEST

For the policymaker

Assess targeted support, fiscal cost and households' ability to switch or reduce demand.

A large headline subsidy can still miss people.

WHY THIS MATTERS

A real global shock does not remove the need for local accountability. The most useful explanation connects an observed event to a particular cost, then shows what can be changed.

IMF research describes uneven transmission and the fiscal costs of broad relief. Policy choices remain context dependent.

What the evidence can carry

Linked primary sources, reporting periods and boundaries. Figures are dated evidence, not live operational advice.

01 EIA: refinery inputs, Q2 and Q3 2026 (3 November)

02 IEA: Hormuz baseline for 2025 (February 2026)

03 EIA: November 2026 Short-Term Energy Outlook

04 EIA: components of US petrol prices

05 IMF: energy, trade and finance transmission (30 March 2026)

06 IMF: energy shock and government budgets (18 June 2026)

EDITORIAL BOUNDARIES

No claim about today's shipping volume, a ceasefire, control of the strait or a live retail quote.

US$124 is the observed October Brent average. About US$100 for November and December is a forecast. The 2025 flow baseline is historical.

Forecasts depend on assumptions and can change. The surcharge tool is a diagnostic, not legal advice.

SOURCE REVIEW + VISUAL PROVENANCE

Sources reviewed 11 November 2026. AI-assisted research, drafting and visual production. Illustrations depict fictional people and scenes, not documented individuals, properties or events. No original interviews or field reporting are claimed.

Editorial review edition. Publication approval remains outstanding. Source and visual checks do not replace local professional advice.