Benchmark West Texas Intermediate crude, which is used to price oil produced in the U.S., fell by $1.90 to $104.81 per barrel. Brent crude, which prices foreign oil imported by U.S. refineries, gave up $1.91 to $121.89 per barrel.

By JAMES W. WADE III Staff Reporter Have you been to the pump and seen it has jumped by at least 7 cents? Well no need to worry for a little while gasoline prices have finally dropped after 27 days.

The nationwide average for regular unleaded slipped less than a penny to $3.764 per gallon on Tuesday. That ended a streak of price hikes that began on Feb. 8. Pump prices rose by more than 28 cents per gallon in that period, making gasoline the most expensive ever for this time of year.

The relief should be temporary. Experts predict that gasoline will continue to rise over the next several weeks. The Oil Price Information Service predicts the nationwide average could peak at $4.25 per gallon in late April, beating the record high of $4.11 per gallon set in July 2008. Gas prices are likely to remain a topic of fierce debate in the presidential campaign and among economists assessing the impact on the U.S. economy.

Gasoline already tops $4 per gallon in California, Alaska and Hawaii. It's near the $4 mark in several other states, including Connecticut, Illinois, Michigan, New York, Oregon and Washington.

The price of gasoline has tracked the increase in its primary component, crude oil. In the first two months of 2012, oil jumped by an average of 13 percent compared with the same period last year.

Pump prices are almost certain to rise further this spring as refineries switch to making summer fuel blends. This annual changeover temporarily cuts into gasoline supplies just before the summer tourism season.

Oil prices fell in morning trading after Iran agreed to let international nuclear inspectors into its facilities. Oil has surged this year as Western powers confronted Iran over its nuclear program and Iran threatened to shut off a strategic waterway for oil tankers. The announcement eased concerns about a possible disruption to oil supplies around the globe.

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In other energy trading, natural gas futures added 1.2 cents to $2.367 per 1,000 cubic feet after nearly hitting a 10-year low on Monday.

Heating oil gave up 2.67 cents to $3.1907 per gallon and gasoline futures lost 2.33 cents to $3.2347 per gallon.