MARKET UPDATE · OCTOBER 2026

Raw Material Costs and Your Truck Parts

What is happening to steel, rubber, metals and fuel this fall, which Class 7 and 8 truck and trailer parts feel it first, and how to plan your parts budget for the months ahead.

U.S. HOT-ROLLED STEEL **$1,255 / short ton** +52% vs. a year ago · highest since May 2022	NATURAL RUBBER (SGX FUTURES) **≈ 250 ¢ / kg** Highest level since early 2013 (late Sept)	U.S. DIESEL, RETAIL AVERAGE **$6.53 / gal** Record high, week of Sept 21 (EIA)
BRENT CRUDE OIL **$114 / bbl** September 2026 average (EIA)	COPPER (LME) **≈ $14,400 / t** Mid-October · near record levels	ALUMINUM (LME) **≈ $3,000 / t** Mid-October · eased from mid-year highs

Benchmark levels as published by the sources listed on the last page, mid-October 2026 unless noted. Benchmarks are market reference prices, not part prices.

The short version

Parts costs this fall are being pushed up by three things at once: tight commodity markets, U.S. tariffs on steel, aluminum and copper, and record diesel prices. Fuel-linked costs are expected to ease during 2027. Steel- and rubber-heavy parts are likely to stay expensive longer.

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What is happening

1. U.S. steel is at a four-year high

Hot-rolled coil, the benchmark for most truck and trailer steel, reached $1,255 per short ton in mid-October, up 52% from a year earlier and the highest level since May 2022. A year ago, spot prices sat between $825 and $865. Nucor, the largest U.S. producer, has raised its published spot price nearly every week since early September, from $1,190 to $1,255, with mill lead times of three to five weeks.

2. Natural rubber is at a 13-year high

Rubber futures climbed to about 250 U.S. cents per kilogram in late September, the highest level since early 2013, on tight supply and weather disruptions in the main producing countries of Southeast Asia. High oil prices make synthetic rubber more expensive too, so manufacturers have little room to switch compounds to save cost.

3. Diesel set a record and crude stays high

The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) recorded an all-time high national average diesel price of $6.53 per gallon in the week of September 21. Brent crude averaged $114 per barrel in September. The EIA points to tight global distillate supply and disrupted Middle East exports. Diesel affects parts prices twice: in the cost of making them and in freight on every shipment.

4. Tariffs now apply to the full value of imported metal goods

A presidential proclamation of April 2, 2026, effective April 6, changed how Section 232 duties are charged on steel, aluminum and copper. Duties now apply to the full customs value of covered goods, not only their metal content: 50% on articles made entirely or almost entirely of these metals, and 25% on many derivative products. Reduced rates apply to some equipment through December 31, 2027, and to goods made with U.S.-produced metal. For buyers, this means imported finished parts and assemblies carry the duty on their whole value.

5. Copper is tight, aluminum has eased

LME copper traded around $14,400 per tonne in mid-October, close to record territory. Aluminum has moved the other way, down to about $3,000 per tonne from roughly $3,400 in June, although U.S. buyers still pay regional delivery premiums and tariffs on top of the exchange price.

What it means for your parts

Not every part reacts the same way. Heavy, simple parts made mostly of one material move first and most. Complex assemblies with electronics and machining move later and by less, because raw material is a smaller share of their cost. The table below shows where this fall's increases are concentrated.

Product family	Main cost drivers	Cost sensitivity	What to expect
Air springs (air bags)	Natural and synthetic rubber, steel pistons and hardware, fabric cord	High	Rubber at a 13-year high plus costlier steel hardware. Price adjustments tend to come in steps rather than gradually.
Brake drums and rotors	Cast iron and steel, energy for casting	High	Heavy, material-dense parts. Among the first to reflect steel increases.
Brake pads and shoes	Steel backing plates, friction materials, resins	Medium	Follows steel and resin costs, usually more moderately than drums.
Steel wheels	Hot-rolled and rim steel	High	Tracks the steel benchmark closely.
Aluminum wheels	Aluminum, U.S. delivery premium, energy	Medium-High	Still elevated, but aluminum is the input with the most room to ease.
Leaf springs and suspension	Spring steel, structural steel	High	Direct exposure to the steel increase.
Fifth wheels, landing gear, hitches	Cast and structural steel, machining	High	Steel costs plus full-value tariffs on imported units.
Tires	Natural and synthetic rubber, carbon black, steel cord	Very high	Nearly every input is elevated at the same time.
Electrical: harnesses, alternators, starters, lighting	Copper, resin housings, electronics	Medium-High	Watch availability and lead times as much as price.
Bushings, mounts, hoses, seals, diaphragms	Rubber compounds, steel inserts	High	Small parts with a high rubber share. Percentage increases can exceed those on larger parts.
Mudflaps, fenders, composite panels	Plastic resins (oil-based), rubber	Medium	First in line to benefit if oil prices ease in 2027.

Cost sensitivity reflects how much of each part family's cost comes from the inputs that rose most this year. It is a guide to where price changes are most likely, not a price for any specific part number.

Timing and quick math

When do material costs reach your invoice?

Parts prices rarely change the same day a commodity does. Mills and compounders update their price lists first. Manufacturers then work through material they bought earlier, and distributors publish new price files after that. As a result, a material increase typically reaches parts invoices over the following weeks to months.

Two practical consequences for buyers:

- Today's raw material prices are a preview of next quarter's parts prices. The steel and rubber levels in this update point to firm parts pricing through the winter.
- Increases travel faster than decreases. Surcharges can be added quickly, while price reductions wait for higher-cost inventory to clear. Any relief in 2027 will reach parts prices some time after it shows up in the markets.

Quick math: what steel adds per part

Steel is the largest single material in most truck and trailer hardware. The table converts the steel benchmark into material cost per part by weight. Use the steel weight of the part in front of you.

Steel weight in the part	Material cost per $100 / short ton move	Material cost change over the past year (+$390 to $430 / short ton)
50 lb	$2.50	$9.75 to $10.75
100 lb	$5.00	$19.50 to $21.50
200 lb	$10.00	$39 to $43
1 short ton (2,000 lb)	$100	$390 to $430

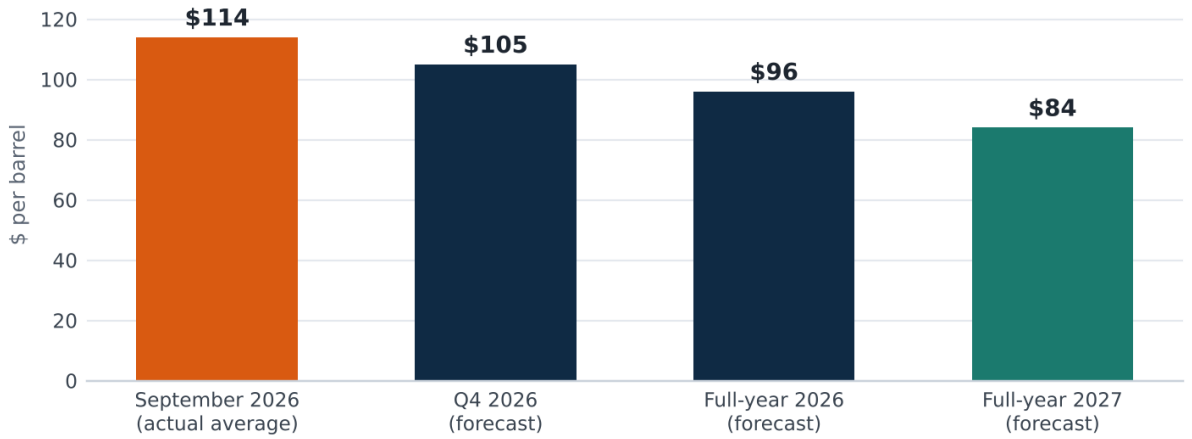
Raw steel cost only, before forming, casting, machining, freight or tariffs on imported parts. The past-year change compares $1,255 per short ton in mid-October 2026 with $825 to $865 a year earlier.

> Example: a dry-van trailer that uses about 3.5 short tons of purchased steel carries roughly $1,370 to $1,500 more in steel cost than it did a year ago, before any other material, freight or tariff effect.

Outlook and planning

Oil: the EIA expects relief in 2027

The EIA's October 2026 Short-Term Energy Outlook expects Brent crude to average $105 per barrel in the fourth quarter, then ease to $84 in 2027 as Middle East exports gradually recover. Fuel, freight and oil-based materials such as resins and synthetic rubber should be the first costs to soften.



Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, Short-Term Energy Outlook, October 6, 2026. Forecasts are the EIA's and can change with each monthly release.

Steel and rubber: likely to stay firm longer

U.S. steel prices are supported by tariffs that do not depend on world prices, and the reduced transitional tariff rates run through December 31, 2027. Natural rubber supply cannot respond quickly because new trees take years to reach production. Plan for steel- and rubber-heavy parts to stay expensive after fuel costs ease.

Practical steps for your fleet

- **Plan replacements that are already due.** If drums, springs, air springs or tires are coming due this winter, ordering on your normal schedule usually beats waiting for a price drop.
- **Never defer safety parts to chase a forecast.** Any future easing is likely to be smaller than the cost of a single roadside failure or out-of-service event.
- **Ask for the validity date on every quote** and confirm pricing in writing when you accept it.
- **Check the trend monthly, not daily.** Commodity prices move every week; parts prices respond over quarters.

Talk to TAG Fleet Parts. Planning a large order or a fleet-wide replacement? Our team can help you time purchases, compare options and confirm availability on the parts you depend on. Contact us at **sales@tagfleetparts.com** or visit **tagfleetparts.com**.

Sources

- **U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA).** Short-Term Energy Outlook, October 6, 2026 (Brent September 2026 average and forecasts for Q4 2026, 2026 and 2027). eia.gov/outlooks/steo
- **U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA).** Gasoline and Diesel Fuel Update, weekly U.S. on-highway diesel price survey, September-October 2026. eia.gov/petroleum/gasdiesel
- **Nucor Corporation.** Weekly consumer spot price (CSP) for hot-rolled coil, September 8 to October 19, 2026.
- **Fastmarkets** and **Kallanish.** U.S. hot-rolled coil price assessments, October 2026 and October 2025.
- **London Metal Exchange (LME).** Official aluminium and copper prices, June-October 2026. lme.com
- **Singapore Exchange (SGX).** Natural rubber futures, September-October 2026. sgx.com
- **The White House.** Proclamation "Strengthening Actions Taken to Adjust Imports of Aluminum, Steel, and Copper into the United States," April 2, 2026, and accompanying fact sheet. whitehouse.gov
- **U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP).** Section 232 entry guidance for aluminum, steel and copper, May 6, 2026. cbp.gov

About this update

TAG Fleet Parts supplies heavy-duty aftermarket parts for Class 7 and 8 trucks and trailers. We publish market updates so fleet managers and buyers can see what is moving parts prices and plan ahead.

This update is market information only. It is not a quote, a price commitment or financial advice. Benchmark prices are market reference levels; the price of any part also depends on its specification, freight, tariffs and supplier terms. Market prices change daily. Figures are as published by the sources above as of mid-October 2026.