



OXNARD POLICE DEPARTMENT

Protecting Our Community with Exceptional Service

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NEWS RELEASE

DATE: March 17, 2020, 11:00 A.M.

SUBJECT: Price Gouging

LOCATION: Oxnard, CA

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On March 4, 2020, Governor Gavin Newsome proclaimed a state of emergency in California, and the City of Oxnard proclaimed a local emergency on March 13, 2020, due to the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Price gouging is a common occurrence during emergencies when there is stress on the supply or demand of goods or services. Price gouging occurs when a seller increases the prices of goods or services to a level that is higher than what is considered reasonable or fair. Specifically, goods and service providers may not charge a price that is more than 10 percent higher than the price that existed prior to the proclamation.

The Oxnard Police Department has received reports of price gouging in our community. We would like to remind our business owners that price gouging is illegal. The Oxnard Police Department will criminally investigate reports of price gouging.

The price gouging laws apply to products and necessities including: food and drink (including food and drink for animals); emergency supplies such as water, flashlights, radios, batteries, candles, blankets, soaps, diapers, toiletries; and medical supplies such as prescription and nonprescription medications, bandages, gauze, isopropyl alcohol, and antibacterial products. The price gouging law also applies to hotel accommodations and rental housing.

Those who are involved in price gouging are subject to criminal prosecution, which can result in one year in county jail and/or a fine of up to \$10,000. Violations are also subject to civil enforcement actions, including civil penalties of up to \$5,000 per violation and mandatory restitution.

Comments from Police Chief Scott Whitney include, "We want to educate our business owners and give them fair warnings about how these laws apply in an emergency. We will

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work with the District Attorney's Office and our other law enforcement partners to aggressively protect our residents against this type of behavior."

The Ventura County District Attorney's Office has set up a phone line and an email address specifically for reporting price gouging. Anyone with information regarding suspected price gouging is encouraged to notify the Ventura County District Attorney's Office at (805) 662-1737 or by sending an email to DAOpricegouging@ventura.org.

In addition to price gouging, residents should be on the lookout for other types of scams that are common during emergencies. Scammers may set up websites or charities, send emails, texts, or post on social media pretending to be from a government agency in an attempt to profit illegally. Also, be cautious of any business claiming to have a miracle treatment. There is currently no cure for the coronavirus. Do not allow your fear or anxiety to overtake your common sense.