



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY COUNTY OF MADERA

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INFORMATION BULLETIN

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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PRICE GOUGING LAWS AND THE CORONAVIRUS

Governor Gavin Newsom Declared a state of emergency in California on March 4, 2020. The Madera County District Attorney's Office cautions businesses and scammers not to take advantage of consumers by price gouging during the ongoing threat posed by COVID-19. It is illegal for businesses to increase its prices for essential goods or services by more than 10 percent unless they can show that their own costs have been increased.

Violations of the price gouging statute are subject to criminal prosecution that can result in a one-year county jail sentence 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, injunctive relief, and mandatory restitution.

Essential goods and services include food and drink, emergency supplies (water, flashlights, radios, batteries, candles, blankets, soaps, diapers, toiletries), and medical supplies (prescription and nonprescription medications, bandages, gauze, isopropyl alcohol, and antibacterial products).

It is also a misdemeanor for a hotel or motel to increase regular rates by more than 10 percent during a declared emergency and for the 30 days following the state of emergency.

Consumers should also be wary of fake websites or "phishing" emails and text messages during this time. For accurate current information on COVID-19, please check government websites such as:

<https://www.cdc.gov/>
<https://www.maderacounty.com/government/public-health/health-updates/corona-virus>

For further questions and concerns regarding price gouging during this state of emergency, please contact the Madera County District Attorney's Office at (559) 675-7726.