

# COVID-19 Health Crisis and Price Gouging Alert



## Sacramento County District Attorney's Office

*Semper Justitia*

The State of California is currently under the Governor's declaration of a public health emergency due to the COVID-19 Virus. Whenever federal, state, or local authorities declare a state of emergency, it is unlawful to raise prices for essential consumer goods and services by more than 10% of the existing prices immediately prior to the declaration of emergency.

California Penal Code section 396 makes violations of this rule punishable criminally or civilly with punishment of up to one year in the county jail and a fine of up to \$10,000 or a civil penalty of up to \$2,500 per violation. The statute defines essential consumer goods and services broadly, including but not limited to medical supplies, emergency supplies, food, fuel, lodging, transportation, pet food, repair services, construction services, building materials, and housing rental prices.

Complaints regarding price gouging can be filed with the District Attorney's Office Consumer Protection Division at this link:

<https://sacda.orgin-the-courtroom/consumer-environmental-protection/consumer-unit/consumer-fraud-complaint-form/>