

OFFICE OF THE
DISTRICT ATTORNEY
COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

JOYCE E. DUDLEY
District Attorney



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Joyce E. Dudley

APPROVED BY JOYCE E. DUDLEY, DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Joyce Dudley, District Attorney

CONTACT (805) 568-2308

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RE: *Price-Gouging Laws are now in effect throughout Santa Barbara County*

On March 11, 2020, the Governor issued a Proclamation of a State of Emergency with price-gouging protections in effect through September 4, 2020. Therefore, Santa Barbara County District Attorney Joyce E. Dudley announced that her office will diligently investigate and prosecute cases of price-gouging for as long as Santa Barbara County is under a State of Emergency for the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19).

District Attorney Dudley also encouraged County residents to report any instances of price-gouging when shopping for consumer goods or medical supplies.

California's anti-price-gouging statute, Penal Code Section 396, prohibits raising the price of many consumer goods and services by more than 10% after an emergency has been declared.

This law applies to any person or business selling goods or services including consumer goods, food and drink items, emergency supplies, medical supplies, storage facilities, emergency cleanup materials and transportation.

Violations of the price-gouging statute are subject to criminal prosecution that can result in one-year imprisonment in county jail and/or a fine of up to \$10,000.

Violators are also subject to civil enforcement actions including civil penalties of up to \$5,000 per violation, injunctive relief and mandatory restitution.

District Attorney Dudley stated, "Local businesses have traditionally been community partners during crises, but anyone that profiteers during a state of emergency will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. County residents must have access to necessary supplies, especially when community health is at stake."

The Santa Barbara County District Attorney's Office is committed to protecting consumers during this emergency. Anyone who suspects they have been the victim of price-gouging, or who has information regarding potential price-gouging, is encouraged to immediately file a complaint with the District Attorney's Office by completing a Consumer Complaint Form on our website ([English version](#), [Spanish version](#)) or by calling 805-568-2300.

For more information on price-gouging, please see the Attorney General's website (<https://www.oag.ca.gov/consumers/pricegougingduringdisasters>)

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