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*** * * * * P R E S S R E L E A S E * * * * ***

District Attorney Joyce E. Dudley announced today that Governor Brown has extended the emergency period applicable to the crime of price gouging to December 4, 2018.

As related to the Thomas Fire and subsequent debris flows, Governor Brown declared a state of emergency in Santa Barbara County on December 5, 2017, and again on January 8, 2018. California law generally prohibits businesses and individuals from raising prices for 30 days after an emergency declaration. Due to the ongoing effects of these disasters though, Governor Brown issued an executive order extending the emergency period to December 4, 2018.

Under Penal Code section 396, it is illegal to charge a price for essential goods and services that is more than 10 percent higher than the price charged immediately before the emergency declaration. If a business does so it could be guilty of the crime commonly known as price gouging.

This statute applies to hotels/motels, consumer food items, goods, or services used for emergency cleanup, emergency supplies, medical supplies, home heating oil, contractor's services, building materials, housing, transportation (including towing services), freight, storage services, gasoline, and other motor fuels.

Price gouging is subject to criminal prosecution and carries a penalty of up to one year in county jail and a fine of up to \$10,000. Violators may also face civil enforcement actions and penalties.

District Attorney Dudley stated, "Amongst the most generous members of our communities have always been our local businesses who have historically shown great compassion for those affected by disasters." But, Dudley cautioned, "If any predator business criminally misuses this disaster for its own benefit, we will prosecute to the full extent of the law."

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