



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 13, 2020
www.texasattorneygeneral.gov

PRESS OFFICE: (512) 463-2050
Kayleigh Date:
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AG Paxton Warns of Price Gouging as Texans Prepare to Prevent the Spread of Coronavirus

AUSTIN – As Texans take precautions against exposure to Coronavirus (COVID-19) and prepare for the possibility of self-quarantine if affected, Attorney General Ken Paxton warned that state law prohibits price gouging in the wake of a declared disaster. Governor Greg Abbott today issued a statewide disaster declaration.

“Any person or business selling goods must be aware that they are prohibited by law from engaging in price gouging if they unreasonably raise the cost of necessary supplies at any point during a declared disaster,” said Attorney General Paxton. “My office will work aggressively to prevent disaster scams and stands ready to prosecute any price-gouger who takes advantage of those taking precautions and looking for safety and supplies.”

Currently, the disaster declaration prompted by several discovered cases of Coronavirus in Texas is effective across the entire state. Price gouging is illegal, and a disaster declaration triggers tough penalties under the Texas Deceptive Trade Practices Act. Price-gougers may be required to reimburse consumers and may be held liable for civil penalties of up to \$10,000 per violation with an additional penalty of up to \$250,000 if the affected consumers are elderly.

Texans who believe they have encountered price gouging should call the Office of the Attorney General’s toll-free complaint line at (800) 621-0508 or file a complaint online at www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/consumer-protection.

For information on the spread or treatment of Coronavirus (COVID-19), please visit the Texas Department of State Health Services at dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/.

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AG Paxton Warns Texans of Scammers Taking Advantage of Coronavirus Emergency

AUSTIN – Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton today cautions Texans to be aware of scams in light of the statewide Coronavirus disaster declaration announced earlier today by Governor Abbott.

“Situations like this usually bring the best of our communities to the forefront with cooperation, aid, and compassion. Unfortunately, some criminals take advantage of troubling circumstances to steal from hard-working Texans,” said Attorney General Paxton. “As communities prepare to prevent the spread of Coronavirus and care for those in need, my office will work diligently to stop the scams perpetrated by those who look to take advantage of our citizens.”

In addition to price gouging and deceptive trade practices, cyber scams have been reported. Cyber actors may send emails with dangerous attachments or fraudulent website links intended to deceive citizens into revealing sensitive information or donating to false charities. Any social media posts or email with a Coronavirus (COVID-19) subject line, attachment, or hyperlink should be treated with caution. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security issued these precautions:

- Avoid clicking on links in unsolicited emails and be wary of email attachments.
- Use trusted sources – such as legitimate, government websites – for up-to-date, fact-based information about COVID-19.
- Do not reveal personal or financial information in email, and do not respond to email solicitations for this information.
- Verify a charity’s authenticity before making donations.

Under state law, once the governor issues a declaration, vendors are prohibited from charging exorbitant prices for necessities such as drinking water, food, batteries, medicine, lodging, and more. Currently, the disaster declaration is effective across the entire state, and under Texas consumer protection statutes, it is illegal for a person to take advantage of a disaster declaration by engaging in deceptive trade practices.

Texans who believe they have encountered disaster scams should call the Office of the Attorney General’s toll-free complaint line at (800) 621-0508 or file a complaint online at www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/consumer-protection. For additional information on disaster scams, please visit our website at www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/cpd/disaster-scams.

For information on the spread or treatment of Coronavirus (COVID-19), please visit the Texas Department of State Health Services at dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/.

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