



CORONAVIRUS AND PRICE GOUGING IN CONNECTICUT

As Connecticut and our country work to contain the coronavirus, the Office of the Attorney General has received multiple complaints regarding large price hikes in basic supplies like hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes.

Price gouging and taking advantage of people during a crisis is wrong. And, during a state of emergency, it is also against Connecticut law. Connecticut laws prohibit price gouging in retail sales during a publicly declared emergency.

Acting in coordination with the Department of Consumer Protection, the Office of the Attorney General may file suit against price gougers, and may seek injunctive relief, restraining orders, restitution, and civil financial penalties designed to deter future unscrupulous sales.

RETAIL PRICES

Under Connecticut Law, Conn. Gen. Stat. § 42-230, it is illegal to increase the price of any item sold at retail in an area which is the subject of any emergency disaster duly declared by the Governor while that emergency declaration is pending. This conduct is commonly referred to as “price gouging.”

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 42-230 does not, however, prohibit the fluctuation in the price of items sold at retail “which occurs during the normal course of business.” Violations of § 42-230 subject the person, firm or corporation to fines up to \$99 per violation and any violation of this section is considered an unfair or deceptive trade practice in violation of CUTPA, Conn. Gen. Stat. § 42-110b.

RETAIL PRICES ON SUPPLY EMERGENCY ITEMS

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 42-232 prohibits price gouging on specifically identified retail items that are the subject of a Supply Emergency Proclamation declared by the Governor.

During the course of a Governor-declared supply emergency, no person shall sell or offer for sale any product or service that the Governor has designated to be in short supply or in danger of becoming in short supply in the area during the emergency declaration period at a price which exceeds the price in the usual course of business immediately prior to the declaration issuing. In other words, it is illegal to increase the price of the retail items identified by the Governor while the Governor's supply emergency declaration is in effect.

Any violation of § 42-232 shall be deemed an unfair trade practice under Conn. Gen. Stat. § 42-110b and exposes the violator to Class D felony charges.

WHAT IS PRICE GOUGING?

- Price gouging or profiteering means increasing the price of an item for sale at retail by more than could be justified in the ordinary course of business market fluctuations.
- Under Connecticut Law, there are three civil statutes that prohibit price gouging on retail sales: Conn. Gen. Stat. §§ 42-230, 42-232, and 42-110b.
- Under certain circumstances, price gouging is a crime in our state.

WHAT TO DO?

- Stay calm and listen to the public health experts.
- Don't let these predators profit off your panic.
- Consumers may see price increases in the coming days and weeks. Not all price increases are the result of price gouging. The basic economic laws of supply and demand can and do affect prices in times like these.
- Consumers should take appropriate precautions to protect themselves personally and financially.
- Anyone who suspects price gouging should file a complaint immediately with the Attorney General's Office online or by calling 860-808-5318.