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For Immediate Release

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Warning About Price Gouging

(Fort Worth, TX) – A word of warning to anyone thinking about hiking prices for products ranging from bottled water to plumbing materials: Don't do it.

Price gouging is illegal in Texas.

"Price gouging will not be tolerated in Tarrant County. All reports of price gouging will be referred immediately to the Texas Attorney General for investigation and prosecution as required by law," said Tarrant County Criminal District Attorney Sharen Wilson.

Texas law prevents price gouging when there's a disaster. The Texas Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division investigates reports of price gouging on a case-by-case basis.

Texas Governor Greg Abbott on February 12, 2021, issued a disaster declaration as severe winter weather "posed an imminent threat of widespread and severe property damage, injury, and loss of life due to prolonged freezing temperatures, heavy snow, and freezing rain statewide."

Tarrant County Judge Glen Whitley on February 15, 2021, issued a declaration of disaster because of the ice, snow and below freezing temperatures that created impassible roads, accidents, damage to critical infrastructure and more.

President Joe Biden on February 19, 2021, declared a major disaster – after a week of freezing temperatures that left many without power or water – for dozens of Texas counties, including Tarrant.

The Texas Attorney General's Office notes that high prices don't necessarily mean price gouging is occurring. But if businesses set exorbitant prices after a disaster has been declared, that could be price gouging.

Texans who believe they have found price gouging should call the Texas Attorney General's toll-free complaint line at (800) 621-0508 or email consumeremergency@oag.texas.gov. Complaints also may be filed at www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/consumer-protection/file-consumer-complaint.

If you see price gouging, note the store or vendor that had the item as well as any product details, including the price, size and brand. Make sure to note the time, date and location where you saw the product. Take pictures if possible. And include how you addressed the situation, such as listing the names of people you spoke with about the price issue.

Anyone caught price gouging in Texas could face civil penalties up to \$10,000 per violation. Penalties can go up even more if the person impacted is elderly.

