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OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL STATE OF FLORIDA

Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

Price Gouging Hotline Expanded for Tropical Storm Eta



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody today expanded Florida's Price Gouging Hotline to encompass essential commodities related to Governor Ron DeSantis' declaration for a state of emergency for Tropical Storm Eta. The state of emergency is in effect for the following counties: Broward, Collier, Hendry, Lee, Martin, Miami-Dade, Monroe and Palm Beach. Florida's price gouging laws for this event apply only within the areas of the declared state of emergency and only for commodities and services essential to preparing for or recovering from the storm event.

The price gouging laws related to the COVID-19 emergency declaration still remain in effect statewide for commodities that relate specifically to the health crisis. Additionally, many counties remain under separate storm-related states of emergency as a result of Hurricanes Michael and Sally.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "Going into November, many think we have cleared hurricane season, but 2020 is no typical year. There is now a declared state of emergency for Tropical Storm Eta, and many areas of our state could feel the impact from this storm. In preparation for Eta, I am expanding my Price Gouging Hotline to receive reports of extreme price increases on essential storm-related items. It's important for Floridians to remain diligent and take necessary steps to prepare now should Eta strike where you live.

"I want to remind Floridians that we are now under multiple states of emergency in Florida—including one for Eta, one statewide for COVID-19 and two in panhandle counties for Hurricanes Michael and Sally. Essential commodities for each declaration may differ, but it

remains illegal for sellers to use an emergency to exploit consumers relating to essential items. We will continue to work in real-time to ensure scammers will not get in the way of Floridians protecting their properties and families. If you see potential price gouging, please report it to my office immediately."

Amid a storm-related declared state of emergency, state law prohibits excessive increases in the price of essential commodities needed as a direct result of the storm event—including food, water, hotel rooms, ice, gasoline, lumber and equipment. Floridians can report suspected price gouging to the Attorney General's Office by visiting MyFloridaLegal.com, calling 1(866) 9NO-SCAM or using the NO SCAM app, available to download for free through Apple and Android stores by searching NO SCAM.

Preparedness tips can be found by downloading Attorney General Moody's 2020 Hurricane Preparedness guide here.

For tips on reporting price gouging, click here.

For more information on price gouging, please click here.

For more information about price gouging associated with the statewide COVID-19 emergency declaration, click here.

Violators of the price gouging statute are subject to civil penalties of $1,000 per violation and up to a total of $25,000 for multiple violations committed in a single 24-hour period. In addition to the civil penalties for price gouging, state law criminalizes the sale of goods and services to the public without possession of a business tax receipt and provides for additional penalties for violations of the Deceptive or Unfair Trade Practices Act.

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UPDATE: Governor Ron DeSantis has now extended the state of emergency for Hurricane Eta to the following counties: Alachua, Citrus, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hernando, Hillsborough, Levy, Manatee, Marion, Pasco, Pinellas, Sarasota and Sumter.

The Attorneys General's Price Gouging Hotline is now active for these 13 additional counties. Florida's price gouging laws for this event apply only within the areas of the declared state of emergency and only for commodities and services essential to preparing for or recovering from the storm event.