



# News Release

## Office of the Attorney General

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 14, 2018

#18-22

CONTACT: Samantha Fisher

(615) 741-5860

[Samantha.Fisher@ag.tn.gov](mailto:Samantha.Fisher@ag.tn.gov)

As Hurricane Florence makes landfall, Tennessee Attorney General Herbert H. Slatery III and Tennessee Department of Commerce & Insurance (TDCI) Commissioner Julie Mix McPeak are encouraging consumers to be alert to potential price gouging that could occur.

Tennessee's unfair or deceptive acts or practices law makes it illegal to "unreasonably [raise] prices or unreasonably [restrict] supplies of essential goods, commodities or services in direct response to . . . a natural disaster", even if the event occurs out-of-state. Penalties for violations of the act are up to \$1,000 per violation, and the Attorney General may also seek injunctions, consumer restitution, or other appropriate remedies.

"During this time, we encourage Tennesseans as well as those visiting our State to report activities they believe may exploit the vulnerable conditions caused by Hurricane Florence," Attorney General Slatery said. "Tennessee has a reputation for hospitality and volunteerism. Our Office intends to bring to task any person or business who seeks an advantage from the misfortune of others."

TDCI Insurance Commissioner Julie Mix McPeak said: "During times of crisis, Tennesseans pull together to help their neighbors. Unfortunately, some people view an emergency as a time to benefit themselves at others' expense. We urge consumers to be on the lookout for price gouging and report it as soon as possible."

High prices are not automatically price gouging and may be reasonable based on the costs to the business. If you suspect that you were a victim of price gouging, look for sudden dramatic increases in prices for necessities right before, during, or after a natural disaster. Keep a record of your transaction and record as many details as possible such as the location of the merchant, the date and time of your purchase, the method of payment, the price of the item in days prior to the sudden price increase, and the price you paid. Always keep your receipts. Take pictures of a listed price with your cell phone.

If you believe a business is price gouging, you can file a complaint at [www.tn.gov/consumer](http://www.tn.gov/consumer) or call toll-free at 1-800-342-8385.