

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Office of the Attorney General

ATTORNEY GENERAL
KARL A. RACINE



Office of Consumer Protection

March 24, 2020

VIA HAND DELIVERY



RE: Price Gouging

Dear [REDACTED]:

The District of Columbia Office of the Attorney General has received one or more complaints that since Mayor Bowser declared a Public Health Emergency, you have raised your prices for certain goods at your store at [REDACTED], in violation of District laws protecting consumers during natural disasters. Specifically, you have: 1) raised your price for a spray can of Lysol from \$9.99 to \$19.99, 2) raised your price for a box of 100 generic latex gloves to \$9.99, although this product generally sells for just over \$5.00, and 3) raised your price for a case of 24 Deer Park water bottles to \$11.99, although this product is currently available on Amazon for under \$4.00. On March 11, 2020, Mayor Bowser declared a Public Health Emergency based upon the threatened spread of the Coronavirus. This Declaration triggered certain protections in the District's Natural Disaster Consumer Protection Act, D.C. Code § 28-4101, *et seq.*

This law prohibits merchants from taking advantage of emergencies by increasing the prices for services and merchandise. Concerning merchandise, the law states that merchants may not charge more than “. . . the same percentage over wholesale cost as the retail mark-up for similar merchandise sold in the Washington Metropolitan Area during the 90-day period that immediately preceded an emergency . . .” D.C. Code § 28-4101(2)(B).

The Attorney General for the District of Columbia (“OAG”), is the chief legal officer for the District of Columbia. Pursuant to D.C. Code § 28-3909, OAG is empowered with broad authority to restrain illegal acts. Pursuant to this Office's authority you are hereby directed to immediately bring your prices for Lysol, generic latex gloves and Deer Park water in conformity with District law.


Please contact the undersigned within the next twenty-four hours to confirm that you have modified your pricing. If you have information about changes in the wholesale cost for Lysol, generic latex gloves and Deer Park water that you would like us to consider, please provide it within the next twenty-four hours as well. Your failure to comply with this directive may result in further action by this office.

Sincerely,

KARL A. RACINE
Attorney General for the District of Columbia

By: _____

Wendy J. Weinberg
Senior Assistant Attorney General
Office of Consumer Protection


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