

# BBB Warning: False advertising, price gouging is unfair, illegal

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*Milwaukee, Wis.* – As government officials, news outlets and health officials are keeping the public apprised of the COVID-19 situation, consumers are finding the cost of high-demand items, such as hand sanitizers, tissues, face masks and other products. skyrocketing.

Over the last few weeks, [Better Business Bureau](#) received reports from consumers about the frequency of [scams](#) involving these items and [fake cures](#). Now, [state attorneys general offices](#) may need to initiate a state price-gouging laws, which will automatically go into effect during a declared state of emergency in order to prevent businesses from over-charging customers who are preparing to take preventative measures from getting sick.

Price gouging is a term referring to when a seller spikes the prices of goods, services or commodities to a level much higher than is considered reasonable or fair and is considered exploitative, potentially to an unethical extent. The best way to avoid price gouging is to plan ahead and have the necessary supplies you need on hand.

BBB warns businesses to avoid the temptation to raise prices during a situation such as storm or a pandemic because it may be illegal to do so in certain states and because it erodes marketplace trust. Consumers will remember which businesses took advantage of them during a storm.

Anyone who suspects price gouging during a declared state of emergency should report it to Better Business Bureau by [filing a complaint](#), or to [BBB Ad Truth](#). Consumers have an option to report these activities to the [state attorney general's office](#). When reporting a price gouging complaint, gather as much information as safely possible and follow these three tips:

- **Be as specific about the transaction as possible**, including the name and address of the business, names of any employees involved, and information detailing the spike in pricing.
- **Gather together documentation** supporting the price gouging (receipts, photos of products and their advertised pricing, invoices, etc.)
- **Compare pricing** of similar products with other sellers in the area as well as online. It's important to note similarities and differences between brands, size/quantity, manufacturers, model numbers, and prices.

### **Here are some additional resources from your BBB:**

[More information on coronavirus](#)

Report scams to [BBB Scam Tracker](#)

[Charitable Giving After a Tragedy](#)

#BBBDelivers: For more information, see [BBB.org/Coronavirus](https://www.bbb.org/coronavirus).

For more information or further inquiries, contact the Wisconsin BBB at [www.bbb.org/wisconsin](https://www.bbb.org/wisconsin), 414-847-6000 or 1-800-273-1002. Consumers also can find more information about how to protect themselves from scams by following the Wisconsin BBB on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).

**ABOUT BBB:** For more than 100 years, the Better Business Bureau has been helping people find businesses, brands and charities they can trust. In 2018, people turned to BBB more than 173 million times for BBB Business Profiles on more than 5.4 million businesses and Charity Reports on 11,000 charities, all available for free at [bbb.org](https://www.bbb.org). There are local, independent BBBs across the United States, Canada and Mexico, including BBB Serving Wisconsin which was founded in 1939 and serves the state of Wisconsin.