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ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

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AG Paxton Warns of Price Gouging as Texans Prepare to Prevent the Spread of Coronavirus

AUSTIN – As Texans take precautions against exposure to Coronavirus (COVID-19) and prepare for the possibility of self-quarantine if affected, Attorney General Ken Paxton warned that state law prohibits price gouging in the wake of a declared disaster. Governor Greg Abbott today issued a statewide disaster declaration.

“Any person or business selling goods must be aware that they are prohibited by law from engaging in price gouging if they unreasonably raise the cost of necessary supplies at any point during a declared disaster,” said Attorney General Paxton. “My office will work aggressively to prevent disaster scams and stands ready to prosecute any price-gouger who takes advantage of those taking precautions and looking for safety and supplies.”

Currently, the disaster declaration prompted by several discovered cases of Coronavirus in Texas is effective across the entire state. Price gouging is illegal, and a disaster declaration triggers tough penalties under the Texas Deceptive Trade Practices Act. Price-gougers may be required to reimburse consumers and may be held liable for civil penalties of up to \$10,000 per violation with an additional penalty of up to \$250,000 if the affected consumers are elderly.

Texans who believe they have encountered price gouging should call the Office of the Attorney General’s toll-free complaint line at (800) 621-0508 or file a complaint online at www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/consumer-protection.

For information on the spread or treatment of Coronavirus (COVID-19), please visit the Texas Department of State Health Services at dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/.

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