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\$12 for a gallon of milk? 2K N.J. businesses accused of price gouging amid coronavirus crisis

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A \$12 gallon of milk. One mask for \$25. A few rolls of toilet paper for \$60.

New Jersey is investigating those and other alleged price increases amid the pandemic, officials said Thursday, and the state's consumer affairs division has already sent 731 cease-and-desist letters and more than 90 subpoenas to businesses accused of illegally trying to profit off the coronavirus.

"Price gouging is against the law and intolerable at a time people are doing their best to stay safe," state Attorney General Gurbir Grewal said in a statement.

Residents have logged more than 3,600 complaints against about 2,100 business locations around the state, officials said. The vast majority of complaints concerned personal protective equipment, food, water and disinfectants.

Paul Rodríguez, acting director of the consumer affairs division, asked residents "to remain vigilant and report price gouging and other attempts to take advantage of consumers using our online complaint form."

The form allows residents to upload pictures.

Just in the past seven days, the division sent out three subpoenas and 217 cease-and-desist letters, officials said. Investigators are also examining businesses that may be selling homemade hand sanitizers or personal test kits.

Grewal's office previously announced that about 40 local merchants are also under investigation for illegally raising prices or breaking similar laws while on Amazon, Craigslist, Facebook Marketplace or other sites.

The state's price gouging law took effect last month when the governor declared a state of emergency. Prices generally cannot be increased more than 10 percent, and violations can result in fines of \$10,000 or more.