



# ***NEWS RELEASE***

OFFICE OF ATTORNEY GENERAL HENRY McMASTER  
STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

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## **McMaster: South Carolina Price Gouging Law To Remain In Effect**

**Columbia, S.C. –** As of noon tomorrow, September 27, 2008, Attorney General McMaster will renew the state's price gouging prohibition statute and has issued the following statement:

“Due to continued disruption of supply of petroleum products resulting from Hurricane Ike's landfall, it is necessary to renew the state's price gouging statute for another fifteen (15) day period. Pursuant to SC Code Section 39-5-145, the attorney general now gives notice of a continuing “abnormal disruption of the market” for gasoline and other petroleum products in South Carolina.

Therefore, as of this notice of renewal, price gouging for gasoline and other commodities constitutes an unfair trade practice and a criminal misdemeanor. ‘Price gouging’ requires the charging of an ‘unconscionable price’ not attributed to additional costs or market fluctuations. An unfair trade practice violation carries a civil penalty of up to \$5,000 per violation 39-5-110. In addition, the criminal penalty is a fine of up to \$1,000 and imprisonment of no more than 30 days 39-5-145(K).

Citizens should report inordinate and suspected violations immediately to local law enforcement. This office continues to offer a special email address -- [GasPrices@SCAttorneyGeneral.com](mailto:GasPrices@SCAttorneyGeneral.com), and an information line at (803) 734-3970.”

The prohibition remains in effect until the fifteen (15) day declaration period expires or is terminated by the attorney general.

Since the original declaration on September 12, 2008, the Attorney General's office has received nearly four thousand (4,000) complaints, has issued fifteen (15) civil subpoenas requesting information from various entities, has sent agents to over forty (40) locations associated with the petroleum supply and retail industry, and has made numerous phone calls to additional petroleum industry entities.

The sixteen (16) counties in which civil subpoenas have been issued are: Abbeville County, Aiken County, Anderson County, Berkeley County, Charleston County, Cherokee County, Colleton County, Edgefield County, Florence County, Greenville County, Laurens County, Newberry County, Oconee County, Pickens County, Spartanburg County, Sumter County. (Some entities are represented in more than one county.)

To date, there have been no charges of price gouging brought against any entity by the Attorney General's Office. The investigation into potential price gouging will continue.

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