



Protecting consumers from unfair business practices and scams during the Alberta wildfires

Consumer Protection Act

Albertans are working together to support and keep each other safe during the wildfires in our communities. At this time, it's also important to keep an eye out for those who would try to take unfair advantage of the situation for financial gain.

If you believe you've been treated unfairly for a good or service you've purchased from an individual or business, you have rights as a consumer. The [Consumer Protection Act](#) (CPA) protects you from unfair business practices before, during or after a consumer transaction.

The Government of Alberta will never send you unsolicited emails, text messages, or call you by phone to ask for your personal or banking information. These are phishing scams and if you believe you've been the target of one, contact your local police or go online at: www.antifraudcentre-centreantifraude.ca

What are “unfair practices?”

An unfair practice is where a business seeks to mislead or deceive a consumer or takes advantage of an individual's circumstances.

Here are some examples:

- offering services or selling goods with inflated or excessive prices or fees;
- claiming that goods are available when the business knows they are not;
- applying undue pressure to make a sale, for example, by indicating that supplies are running out;
- using misleading or deceptive advertising;
- making false promises; or
- taking money with no intention of doing the work.

During disasters or emergency situations, it's not uncommon for reports of price gouging to occur. If the price you pay grossly exceeds that of similar goods or services that are readily available, and the business fails to inform you why they are charging more than their competitors, that may qualify as an unfair practice under the CPA.

Examples include:

- retail stores raising prices for goods, including grocery items such as bottled water or toilet paper;
- lodging rates, such as for hotels or motels.

Unfair practices in private sales between individuals

The CPA will generally not cover private sales between individuals. However, if the seller is determined to be operating a business online and overcharging, misleading or otherwise exploiting buyers, the legislation may apply.

How you can help prevent unfair practices

- Ask questions to understand the full terms and conditions before you buy.
- Never sign a contract unless you have read it to make sure it includes all the terms and conditions you agreed to. All verbal claims that a salesperson made about the goods or services should be written in the contract.
- Always keep your bills of sale, contracts, receipts, warranties and cancelled cheques.

How you can report unfair practices

During the emergency period, consumers can report suspected unfair practices, including price gouging, by calling **310-4455**, or by emailing cs@gov.ab.ca.

For more information:

- The [Consumer Protection page](#) on alberta.ca has information about the Consumer Investigations Unit and the laws that protect consumers.
- The [Consumer and business tips page](#) on alberta.ca contains an online library of tipsheets on a variety of issues, including unfair practices