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Office of The Attorney General

- Gurbir S. Grewal, *Attorney General*

New Jersey State Police

- Colonel Patrick Callahan, *Superintendent*

For Further Information:

Media Inquiries-

Peter Aseltine
609-292-4791

Citizen Inquiries-

609-984-5828

AG Grewal and Col. Callahan Issue Weekly Round-Up on COVID-19 Enforcement Matters

TRENTON – Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal and Colonel Patrick J. Callahan, Superintendent of the New Jersey State Police, today announced enforcement highlights from the past week, including coughing and spitting assaults and bias incidents, and noteworthy violations of Governor Murphy’s Executive Orders. The Attorney General also announced enforcement actions targeting price-gouging, consumer fraud violations, and alcoholic beverage control violations.

“We’re cracking down on those who jeopardize public health and undermine public safety,” said Attorney General Grewal. “We have zero patience for those who spit on cops, gouge prices, or try to exploit this pandemic for their personal gain.”

“Although law enforcement and medical professionals are on the frontlines of the battle against COVID-19, we are ultimately winning the war because of the extraordinary resolve and fortitude of New Jersey citizens who are doing their part day in and day out, abiding by the executive orders and sacrificing for the greater good,” said Colonel Patrick Callahan, Superintendent of the New Jersey State Police. “Those who choose to ignore the law and selfishly place others at risk will face swift law enforcement action.”

Assaults and Threats Against Police Officers, EMTs, or Others

- **John R. Hendricks, 19, of Rumson**, was charged on April 25 by the Middletown Township Police Department with terroristic threats during an emergency (2nd degree), aggravated assault on a police officer (3rd degree), resisting arrest (3rd degree), criminal mischief (3rd degree), and violating the emergency orders. Andrew R. Jacome, 18, of Fair Haven, was charged with criminal mischief (3rd degree) and violating the emergency orders. Homeowners called police to report two subjects throwing rocks at their door, vandalizing their vehicle, and exploding fireworks in their mailbox. Police arrested Hendricks and Jacome nearby. Hendricks allegedly attempted to flee and physically resisted arrest. He allegedly screamed at the victims, threatening to return and burn their house down. At police headquarters, Hendricks allegedly tried to kick officers and spat on the floor, claiming he had the coronavirus.
- **Alana B. Hall, 24, of Wenonah**, was charged on April 26 by the Woodbury Police with terroristic threats during an emergency (2nd degree), aggravated assault (3rd degree), and disorderly conduct. It is alleged that Hall purposely coughed on medical staff at Inspira Medical Center and said she was infected

with COVID-19. She allegedly scratched and struck a nurse technician, spat on her, and fought with other medical personnel.

- **Jaymee Tice, 37, of Point Pleasant Borough**, was charged on April 26 by the Point Pleasant Borough Police with second-degree terroristic threats during an emergency. Tice entered the driver's seat of an occupied vehicle while the driver was inside getting ice cream at Sundaes on Route 88. The car owner saw Tice and returned to her vehicle. She managed to get Tice out, but Tice allegedly shouted at her, saying, "Do you want corona? Do you want to die?"
- **Jenna Richardson, 24, of West Deptford**, was charged on April 29 by the West Deptford Police with second degree terroristic threats during an emergency and fourth-degree throwing bodily fluid at an officer. Richardson allegedly spat on an officer and said she had COVID-19.
- **Quentin Daniels, 33, of Mount Laurel**, was charged by the Mount Laurel Police on April 28 with aggravated assault on a law enforcement officer (4th degree) and obstruction (disorderly persons offense). Police responded to a report of a domestic dispute. Daniels refused to cooperate and attempted to leave. While being handcuffed, he allegedly purposely coughed on officers and said he had the coronavirus. Throughout his transport and upon his initial detention at headquarters, he continually removed the N95 mask placed on him by police and repeatedly coughed on officers, saying, "I hope you all get the virus."

Theft of Personal Protective Equipment

- **Stephen Milligan, 54, of South Amboy**, was charged yesterday with conspiring with **Kevin R. Brady, 49, of Point Pleasant Beach**, to steal up to 1,600 respirator masks from Prudential Financial in Iselin. Brady was charged in the theft on April 23. Like Brady, Milligan was charged with theft by unlawful taking and conspiracy to commit theft, both third-degree charges. The two men were charged in an ongoing investigation by the New Jersey State Police, Middlesex County Prosecutor's Office, Woodbridge Police Department, and Point Pleasant Beach Police Department, based on a referral from the National Hoarding & Price-Gouging Task Force headed by New Jersey U.S. Attorney Craig Carpenito. Brady and Milligan were on-site electrical contractors who had access to storage areas in the Prudential Financial facility. Between March 27 and April 1, Brady and Milligan allegedly stole seven to eight cases of N95 respirator masks, each case containing 200 masks. Prudential Financial had intended to donate the masks to a local hospital. The Middlesex County Prosecutor's Office issued a press release detailing this further.

Price Gouging Enforcement

AG Grewal announced updates on the Division of Consumer Affairs' actions to stop price gouging. As of this week:

- The Division has issued **92 subpoenas** to retailers and online market places reported by consumers for allegedly engaging in unfair price increases.
- Approximately **756 cease-and-desist letters** have been sent, warning retailers about the penalties for violating New Jersey's price-gouging law, and the Consumer Fraud Act's protections from gross and unreasonable inflation of the price of any product during a state of emergency.

The Division has logged a total of **4,245 complaints** related to the COVID-19 emergency against **2,358 locations**. Nearly 90 percent of the complaints allege unlawful price hikes on essential items like food, bottled water, cleaning products, and personal protective equipment such as masks, disinfectants and sanitizers.

Examples of alleged price hikes that consumers have reported to the Division include:

- a convenience store allegedly charging \$4.50 for a quart of milk
- a wholesale store allegedly selling a case of paper towels for \$65, almost double the previous \$35 price
- a supermarket allegedly raising the price of bacon from \$4 to \$9.99—an increase of over 50%
- a medical supply store allegedly selling a 2.4-ounce bottle of hand sanitizer for \$13.42
- a convenience store allegedly charging \$30 for a single face mask
- a dollar store allegedly charging \$3.99 for a package of gloves that used to cost \$1.49
- a gas station allegedly selling purified water that normally costs \$3 for \$14 a pack
- a pharmacy allegedly charging \$10 for small plastic containers of sanitizing wipes, which were previously sold for \$3.99
- a deli allegedly selling a dozen eggs for \$5.99

In addition to price gouging, the Division is looking into complaints from consumers alleging unlawful refund practices as a result of closures related to the COVID-19 health emergency. To date, the Division’s overall complaints include 202 reports of health clubs, hotels, ticket agents and other businesses allegedly refusing to issue refunds after they closed or suspended services as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

New Jersey’s price-gouging law, which took effect on March 9 upon Governor Murphy’s declaration of a state of emergency, prohibits excessive price increases during a declared state of emergency and for 30 days after its termination. A price increase is considered excessive if the new price is more than 10 percent higher than the price charged during the normal course of business prior to the state of emergency, and the increased price is not attributable to additional costs imposed by the seller’s supplier or additional costs of providing the product or service during the state of emergency.

Price-gouging and other consumer fraud violations are punishable by civil penalties of up to \$10,000 for the first violation and \$20,000 for the second and subsequent violations. Violators may also be required to pay consumer restitution, attorney’s fees, and investigative fees, and will be subject to injunctive relief. Each sale of merchandise is considered a separate violation.

Consumers who suspect consumer fraud, violations, or believe that businesses have unfairly increased their prices in response to COVID-19, are encouraged to file complaints online to report specific details investigators can follow up on. Photographs of items being sold, receipts and pricing can now be uploaded to our new price gouging complaint form.

Other Violations of Executive Orders, Including “Stay at Home” Order, and Ordinances

- **Newark Enforcement.** The Newark Police Department’s COVID-19 task force issued 490 summonses for violations of the emergency orders and ordered eight non-essential businesses closed in enforcement actions during the past week, April 24 through 30.
- **Paterson Enforcement.** The Paterson Police Department’s issued 21 summonses for violations of the emergency orders in enforcement actions on April 27.

- **Stephanie Hazelton, 48, of Medford**, was charged with violating the emergency orders for her role in organizing and participating in a protest at the Capitol Complex in Trenton on April 28. She was served with a complaint-summons at her residence.
- **Christopher Pitts, 38, of West Deptford**, was charged on April 25 by the West Deptford Police Department with violating the emergency orders by allowing golfers to play at the golf course he operates, **Westwood Golf Course**. Police had previously warned Pitts, but found approximately 24 people golfing on the course and sharing golf carts without social distancing.
- **Naman Rafi, 39, of Galloway**, was charged by the Galloway Police Department on April 24 with two violations of the emergency orders for opening his business, **Tobacco Outlet** on Jimmie Leeds Road. Rafi had been warned several times about closing the business.
- **Delvis Rivera, 34, of Newark**, was charged on April 24 by the North Arlington Police with violating the emergency orders for cutting hair at the business where he works, **Avenue Cuts 34** on Ridge Road. This was the second complaint about the barber shop being open.
- **Zachary Novosellar, 62, of Lakewood**, was charged on April 28 by the Lakewood Police for hosting an engagement party at his residence on 14th Street. Police found 25 to 30 cars parked on the street and approximately 20 people standing in front of the residence, without social distancing. Novosellar said he arranged for the parties to meet to pick up engagement gifts.
- **John C Bigham, 46, of Chatham**, was charged on April 28 with violating the emergency orders by holding a large birthday party for his wife. Police found a gathering of 25 to 30 people congregating and drinking on his front lawn. The crowd dispersed once the police came.
- **Miran Lee, 44, of Passaic**, was cited twice by the Passaic Police Department, on April 29 and April 30, for violating the emergency orders by opening her massage business on Brook Avenue, which operates under the names **Sky Spa, Ohangs and New Asian Massage**.
- **Janice Lauria, 52, of Point Pleasant**, was charged by the Point Pleasant Police on April 28 with violating the emergency orders by ignoring repeated warnings from the police and allowing individuals to exercise in the gym she owns on Route 88, **Anytime Fitness**.

Violation of the emergency orders is a disorderly persons offense carrying a sentence of up to six months in jail and a fine of up to \$1,000. Such violations are charged by summons, without arrest.

COVID-Related Violations of State Alcohol Laws

AG Grewal announced that the Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) this week issued charges against 20 bars, restaurants, breweries and liquor stores for violating executive orders related to COVID-19. All 20 establishments face suspension of their liquor licenses for at least 10 days. Two other establishments were issued fines for lesser COVID-19 related infractions.

Under executive orders issued by Governor Murphy, businesses licensed to sell alcohol in the state are permitted to remain open during the COVID-19 state-of-emergency, but only for take-out or delivery services of food and alcohol. No table or bar service is permitted, on premise alcohol consumption is prohibited, and alcoholic beverages “to go” must be in sealed original containers.

The establishments facing suspension for violating the orders are:

- Alchemist and Barrister in Princeton
- Bask Bar and Grill in Woodland Park
- Buteco Sports Bar in Long Branch
- Core 3 Brewery in Clayton
- Devil's Creek Brewery in Collingswood
- Disabled American Veterans, Clifton Chapter #2 in Clifton
- Lina's Restaurant in Bloomingdale
- Linwood Inn in Linden
- Medina Liquor Store in Elizabeth
- Old Glory Kitchen and Spirits in Keyport
- Quilvio's Tavern in Paterson
- Rail's Steak House in Towaco
- Randolph Diner in Randolph
- Riviera Maya in Branchville
- Riviera Maya in Rockaway
- Tacos El Tio in Medford
- Taphouse 15 in Wharton
- The Sawmill in Seaside Heights
- Vincenzo's Ristorante in Middlesex

The establishments that received fines are:

- Juliano's Restaurant in Egg Harbor Township (\$500) for offering investigators a beer before they identified themselves.
- The Liquor King in Pennsauken (\$750) for violation of face mask requirements.

Since the state of emergency was declared in New Jersey on March 9, at least 28 people have been charged with second-degree terroristic threats during an emergency for spitting, coughing, or otherwise threatening to deliberately expose officers, medical personnel, or others to COVID-19. Second-degree offenses carry a sentence of five to 10 years in state prison and a fine of up to \$150,000.

Third-degree charges carry a sentence of three to five years in prison and a fine of up to \$15,000, while fourth-degree charges carry a sentence of up to 18 months in prison and a fine of up to \$10,000.

The charges are merely accusations and the defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

If you are seeing a lack of compliance with the Governor's emergency orders in your town, please contact your local police department or report here

[covid19.nj.gov/violation](https://www.covid19.nj.gov/violation)

The Attorney General's Office and New Jersey State Police will continue to work with law enforcement throughout New Jersey to deter non-complaint behavior.

No one should take advantage of this pandemic to further their own biased agendas. COVID-19 is no excuse to promote anti-Semitic conspiracy theories and or other biased stereotypes. Please report bias crimes at **1-800-277-BIAS**.

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