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Consumers Cautioned to Watch Receipts for Accuracy During Holiday Shopping



This is the time of year when merchandise will be flying across scanners as consumers shop for holiday presents. Throughout the year, the Colorado Department of Agriculture Measurement Standards Retail Program performs price verification/scanner accuracy inspections as one of its consumer protection duties.

In addition to the routine scanner inspections conducted, each year before Christmas, Department inspectors make

an inspection sweep of Colorado stores that cater to holiday shoppers. Last year during this sweep, over 5,800 items were checked in 86 retail stores. Forty stop sales were issued for pricing overcharges. This year's scan sweep will begin after the Thanksgiving holiday, known to be one of the busiest shopping times of the year.

"Promising one price and charging a higher price is against the law," said Nick Brechun, CDA Measurement Standards Retail Program Administrator. "Retailers are aware of how important accurate prices are in maintaining customer satisfaction. However, inexperienced employees, higher sales volumes, and more sales may lead to increased pricing errors during the holidays."

Officials at the Colorado Department of Agriculture urge consumers to always check their receipts. Department inspectors visit retailers throughout the year to ensure that consumers pay only the advertised price. Pricing accuracy inspections are conducted at grocery and department stores, drug stores, auto and office supply outlets, convenience stores, and other retail businesses that use electronic scanning devices and UPC look-up equipment. Retail establishments are selected either randomly or using a risk-based inspection system. Using the risk-based inspection system, stores that fail testing are retested until improvement has been demonstrated.

During inspections, items to scan are chosen according to guidelines developed by the National Institute of Standards and Technology. A business fails when more than two percent of the prices checked are found to be overcharges. Stores that fail are subject to stop orders and civil penalties. Undercharges are also noted and brought to the store's attention at the time of inspection, but are not counted toward the business' pass or fail rate.

Overall in 2007, inspectors statewide have found 2.2% of items were overcharge errors. To date in 2007, there have been 110 failed tests, and 57 civil penalties and 675 stop sale orders have been issued. Problems identified by inspectors include errors made during price changes, sale price errors, and incorrectly stocked items. All overcharges found at the time of inspection must be corrected by the store immediately.

To avoid being overcharged, consumers should be aware of prices listed on the shelf, product tag, or advertisement. Inaccuracies should be reported to the store's management.

For additional information, or to file a pricing error complaint, contact the Colorado Department of Agriculture Measurement Standards at (303) 477-4220 or visit the [Inspection and Consumer Services Division website](#).