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Scanner Sweep Shows that Colorado Consumers can Shop with Confidence

LAKEWOOD, Colo. –With Black Friday and the frenzy of holiday shopping drawing near, consumers can purchase with confidence during their gift giving shopping spree. The Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA) has conducted its annual “scanner sweep” to help ensure consumers receive accurate prices at the register.

Throughout the year, CDA’s Division of Inspection and Consumer Service’s (ICS) inspectors perform price verification tests at retail businesses. The purpose of these inspections is to provide consumer protection by ensuring that the represented price for a given item is what will actually be charged at the register. In addition to performing routine inspections, ICS inspectors annually conduct a scanner inspection sweep of Colorado stores that cater to holiday shoppers.

This year, the scanner sweep was conducted in early November. Approximately 17,400 items were tested in 294 retail stores throughout the state. Overall, 99 percent of the stores passed with only three failed tests due to overcharge errors. All overcharges found at the time of inspection are usually corrected immediately by the store.

“Promising one price and charging a higher price is against the law,” said Nick Brechun, CDA Measurement Standards 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.”

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 item prices checked are found to be overcharges. Stores that fail price verification inspections are subject to stop orders and civil penalties. Undercharges are also noted and brought to the store’s attention, but are not counted toward the business’ pass or fail rate. During the November scanner sweep, there were 256 items that were being undercharged at the register.

“It is also important for consumers to always check their sales receipts. 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,” said Brechun.

For additional information, or to file a pricing error complaint, contact the Colorado Department of Agriculture Measurement Standards Program at 303-867-9232. For more information on this program, visit www.colorado.gov/ag/ics and click on “Inspections” and then “Price Verification Inspection.”

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