

## **Nessel: Michigan Consumers Beware of Energy Scammers**

**LANSING** — Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel called in her Consumer Protection team to handle complaints as she reminded Michiganders to be on the lookout for scammers seeking to take advantage of Michigan energy consumers. Nessel spoke today during a news conference with Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and other cabinet members.

“Michigan energy providers and scammers should heed this warning: Those who take advantage of consumers will be held accountable,” Attorney General Nessel said. “My office stands ready to protect all residents from scammers and those who seek to prey on consumers during an emergency situation.”

Nessel noted that energy consumers become an increased target by scammers looking to make a quick buck during states of emergency.

“Utility companies never call customers requesting immediate payment to keep services from being shut off,” said Nessel. “They also don’t ask for payment by gift card, bitcoin, or money order. If consumers suspect a call to be fraudulent, they should hang up and immediately call the utility at the telephone number on their bill and ask to speak with a customer service representative.”

**If consumers believe they have become a victim of retailers engaging in behavior that violates the Consumer Protection Act, they are encouraged to file a complaint at [Michigan.gov/agcomplaints](https://www.michigan.gov/agcomplaints) or call 1-877-765-8388.**

An estimated 320,000 Michigan households use propane as their primary heating fuel. And although propane prices are not regulated, the state actively monitors the market to identify irregularities that may result in supply or price disruptions. Under the Michigan Consumer Protection Act, a retailer may not charge a price that is "grossly in excess of the price at which similar property or services are sold."

Currently, the reported statewide average for propane is approximately \$2.03 per gallon. Consumers who have guaranteed price contracts with propane suppliers may be subject to higher market prices once they’ve used the guaranteed amount covered by their contract.

After the 2013-2014 winter season the Department of Attorney General launched two investigations into grossly excessive propane pricing after receiving hundreds of complaints during the polar vortex and subsequent state of emergency declaration. The department investigated two of the nation’s largest propane companies: Ferrellgas and AmeriGas. The Ferrellgas investigation resulted in an immediate assurance agreement that brought roughly \$100,000 in reimbursements to Michigan consumers while the AmeriGas investigation resulted in a lawsuit that was ultimately settled in an agreement that brought more than \$500,000 in credits or reimbursements to consumers.

The Michigan Agency for Energy has additional resources and energy saving tips for those who heat their homes with propane at [Michigan.gov/propane](https://www.michigan.gov/propane).