# 70 North Carolina stores fined for price scanning errors, overcharging customers, officials say

Excessive price scanning errors and overcharging at stores in North Carolina have led to those stores being fined.

The NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services’ Standards Division said it has collected fines from the stores that are located in 38 counties.

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“Our Standards Division continues to see a significant increase in stores with price scanner errors, as many stores continue to deal with staffing shortages. Overcharges cost consumers so we remain vigilant in inspecting stores in order to protect consumers,” said Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler. “During the holidays especially every penny counts, and we want consumers to pay attention during check out. Over the last year we have seen about 26 percent of price scanner inspections fail. It is always a good practice for consumers to check their receipts as well as the price on the shelf to make sure that they are paying the correct amount and alert managers if they are not correct.”

The department says it conducts periodic, unannounced inspections of price-scanner systems in businesses to check for accuracy between the prices advertised and the prices that ring up at the register.

If a store has more than a 2-percent error rate on overcharges, inspectors discuss the findings with the store manager and conduct a more intensive follow-up inspection later.

According to Director of the Standards Division Stephen Benjamin, “It could be a couple pennies off, it could be dollars off, or even more. We're in a store, like an auto shop, and you're looking at a battery, for instance, or something like that. It could be significantly off. And I would hope the consumer would notice that on the ring up, but if it's just a few pennies you might not.”

Penalties are assessed if a store fails a follow-up inspection

Minuteman Food Mart at 14661 Highway 87, Tarheel paid $1,560. An August inspection found an error rate of 13 percent based on 13 overcharges in a 100-item lot. The store was reinspected in October and failed with an error rate of 10 percent based on 10 overcharges in a 100-item lot. The store was assessed a $1,610 fine and will be reinspected.

Circle K at 3424 Matthews Mint Hill, Matthews has paid $1,665 in fines. An inspection in September found an error rate of 4 percent based on six overcharges in a 100-item lot. The store also failed a reinspection in November with an 8 percent error rate based on eight overcharges in a 100-item lot. The store was assessed a $1,490 fine and will be reinspected..

Sam’s Mart at 10343 Cane Creek Drive, Huntersville paid $930 in fines. An inspection in March found an error rate of 11 percent based on 11 overcharges in a 100-item lot. The store passed inspection in May.