

## **Consumer protections against price gouging expanded to include tree trimmers and restoration companies**

During the recent legislative session, the Big I MN supported an initiative to build upon the success of last year's residential contractor price gouging law. The new law will protect policyholders and insurance carriers against price gouging by tree trimmers and restoration companies following certain weather events. Changes to Minn. Stat. § 325E.80, Abnormal Market Disruptions; Unconscionably Excessive Prices, became effective August 1, 2024.

Under the expansion, tree trimmers and restoration companies are prohibited from engaging in the following activities when repairing damage caused by a weather event classified as a severe thunderstorm:

- 1) Charging unconscionably excessive prices for labor compared to the market price for comparable services provided in the geographic region impacted by the weather event.
- 2) Charging an insurance company rates that exceed what the company would charge a member of the public.

Tree trimmers and restoration and mitigation service providers violating the price gouging expansions are subject to civil penalties of up to \$1,000 per sale or transaction, with a maximum daily penalty of \$25,000.

The Attorney General's Office is responsible for enforcing the price gouging law and does so in response to complaints the Office receives regarding potentially illegal market behavior. Individuals who wish to submit a complaint may do so via an on-line complaint form on the Attorney General's website.