

NEWS

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Prices at county grocery stores check out in time for holidays

A survey of price accuracy at supermarkets last week by the County of San Bernardino Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures showed that customers can be very confident that they are being charged the correct price.

Inspectors checked prices charged at the check stands against advertised or shelf prices at 42 stores. Stores are required to charge the lowest price they have advertised, posted, or quoted to customers.

Stores with more than three locations in the county were inspected at multiple locations with up to five stores checked at the larger chains, specifically Albertsons, Food 4 Less, Ralph's, Stater Brothers, and Vons. Smaller market chains inspected were Cardenas, Costco, Fiesta Food, Jensen's, Rio Ranch, Sam's Club, and Smart & Final. Trader Joe's was also inspected despite having only two locations in the county.

Approximately 20 items per store were randomly selected. Of the more than 800 total items checked in the survey, stores charged a different price on only 11 occasions. The 1.35 percent error rate for items is well below the 2 percent level industry experts say is expected due to human errors in matching price data in their computers with shelf and advertised prices.

None of the items rang up at a higher price, indicating that the markets were doing an excellent job in protecting their customers from overcharges. "To have no overcharges for this many items tested is remarkable," said Roberta Willhite, Deputy Sealer for the County of San Bernardino. "These stores really care about accurate pricing."

The price errors amounted to \$10.14 out of a total purchase price of \$3,810.21, a price difference of about a quarter of 1 percent.

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Store Name	Number of Stores Inspected	Items Checked	Total Price	# of Errors	% Price Error
Albertsons	5	102	492.43	1	-0.10%
Cardenas	3	61	154.71	4	-3.60%
Costco	2	35	708.29	0	0%
Fiesta					
Food	2	40	99.34	0	0%
Food 4					
Less	5	100	268.14	2	-0.20%
Jensen's	2	32	104.76	0	0%
Ralph's	5	100	340.40	1	-0.06%
Rio Ranch	2	42	97.71	0	0%
Sam's					
Club	2	35	502.97	1	-0.09%
Smart &					
Final	3	52	351.06	0	0%
Stater					
Brothers	5	94	239.09	1	-0.20%
Trader					
Joe's	1	14	66.49	0	0%
Von's	5	106	374.68	1	-0.50%

“Customers at markets in San Bernardino County should feel very good about shopping with the effort these markets have made in ensuring accurate prices,” said Ed Layaye, Agricultural Commissioner Sealer. “Price accuracy in general is an important issue for consumers and often they don’t notice errors at the check stands.”