

Wal-Mart settle Calif. pricing suit for \$1.4 mln

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LOS ANGELES, Nov 24 (Reuters) - Wal-Mart Stores Inc (WMT.N: [Quote](#), [Profile](#), [Research](#), [Stock Buzz](#)) agreed to pay \$1.4 million and refund \$3 per customer for future pricing mistakes to settle a lawsuit by California authorities over price scanning errors at the chain's stores statewide, the California Attorney General said on Monday.

An investigation into allegations that Wal-Mart checkout counters were scanning items at higher prices than those advertised on store shelves and signs began in 2005, followed by a lawsuit filed earlier this year in San Diego.

Through random price checks, state investigators found that 164 Wal-Mart stores in 30 California counties had made scanning errors, which averaged \$8.40 per customer, according to California Attorney General Edmund Brown and San Diego District Attorney Bonnie Dumanis.

The investigators found that customers were overcharged on a variety of items, ranging from sports bras to cereal.

"Wal-Mart always strives for 100 percent pricing accuracy," Wal-Mart spokesman Greg Rossiter said. "If we do find pricing discrepancies, we're committed to making it right for our customers, and we are instituting additional measures to do just that."

As part of the settlement, Wal-Mart agreed to implement a pricing accuracy program in its California stores for at least four years. The chain must designate employees to handle consumer complaints and do weekly price accuracy checks.

The company also must post signs describing the refund program at each cashier's stand and offer immediate discounts of \$3 for every item that is priced incorrectly.

If the accurate price is less than \$3, the overcharged customer will receive it for free, the attorney general said.

Wal-Mart has agreed to pay \$1.4 million in restitution, civil penalties and reimbursement for the cost of the probe, plus \$50,000 to the state Consumer Protection Prosecution Trust Fund. (Reporting by Gina Keating; editing by Jeffrey Benkoe)

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