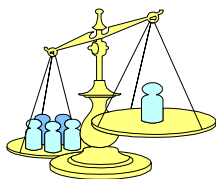


SPOTLIGHT ON WEIGHTS & MEASURES

SONOMA COUNTY SEALER OF WEIGHTS AND MEASURES



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QUANTITY CONTROL

Senior Standard Specialist Caporale attended a meeting in Marin County to discuss a possible settlement with a department store that had been cited for multiple scanner violations throughout California. District Attorneys from Sonoma, Marin, Shasta, San Diego, and Los Angeles Counties were in attendance; as well as representatives from the State of California Department of Food and Agriculture, Division of Measurement Standards, and both San Diego and Marin County Weights and Measures. A settlement was not reached.

A scanner complaint was received due to an overcharge on perfume. An inspector audited several of the perfumes offered for sale at various prices. Three perfumes were scanned through the register and all three perfumes were overcharged. The store offers perfumes, lotions, and deodorants at various discount prices. The shelf prices list a retail price and a discount price.

Some signs also offer an additional percentage discount. The inspector noticed that the computations on the advertised sale prices were incorrect. For example, the retail price of one perfume was \$60.00. The discount price was \$35.99. However, an additional sign above these prices advertised a 50% discount. The item should have scanned at \$30.00 but scanned

at \$35.99, which was an overcharge of \$5.99. Several items were scanned through the register

to see if the correct advertised prices were scanned.

A Notice of Violation was issued for the overcharges. The manager claimed temporary holiday employees had posted incorrect price signs. She also stated signs were easily knocked off and not replaced in the correct location.

Two weeks later another audit was conducted to ascertain if the problem had been corrected. Ten items were scanned and four overcharges were identified, resulting in the issuance of another Notice of Violation. The inspector noticed many of the additional percentage discount signs had been removed and fewer errors were found. However, there were still items that had additional percentage discount signs that were scanning incorrectly. A Civil Penalty was proposed for the overcharges.



DEVICES

In January 425 retail market scales were inspected. Twenty scales were found out of tolerance. This represents a compliance of 95%.

Sonoma County now has several self-service check stand installations. A cashier station monitors each checkstand. Each cashier station is responsible for monitoring four check stands simultaneously and providing assistance to customers. Each check stand has three scales. The first is a commercial scale to weigh produce or sale-by-weight items. Every item in the store is assigned a weight. The second and third scales are for weight comparisons. When an item is scanned or weighed the customer places it in a bag on the second or third scale in order for the system to release the scanner for the next item. If the weights are beyond the .05 lbs. allowable difference, the cashier is alerted and must check the items the customer scanned.

One of the inspectors questioned whether the secondary scales at these stations could be used commercially to weigh bulk items. Upon examining the system, it was determined that the second and third scales could only be used for comparison weights on the item scanned. The third scale is there as a platform for multiple items when the second scale fills up. A customer would not be able to use these scales commercially because if an item is placed on them no weight will register through the system. It must go through the primary system first. The cashier can override the system to make corrections but cannot use the second or third scales for primary weighing.

CONSUMER CORNER

As gas prices continue to soar, there are an increased number of complaints about the

accuracy of gas pumps. Many complaints are received regarding more gas pumped into the

gas tank than the tank's capacity. Customers should be aware that vehicle manuals refer to fuel tank size and the tanks are not calibrated. Fuel gauges are not precise either. Also, there is air space in the fuel tank and up the fill pipe that will hold more fuel. Backpressure from the fuel displacing air in the tank causes a splash that a sensor in the nozzle detects and shuts off the flow. The delivery speed can affect when the splash occurs.

However, that doesn't mean that there is not a possibility of a gas dispenser malfunctioning. We check all dispensers annually and we do find meter errors. If you suspect a problem, please call our office.

CONSUMER TIPS

Be sure when you pump gas that the readout starts at zero. Before pumping, wait for a moment to verify that the readout doesn't begin registering prior to engaging the nozzle handle. If the meter starts to register, there may be a problem with the coaxial hose. Notify the manager and use a different dispenser.

