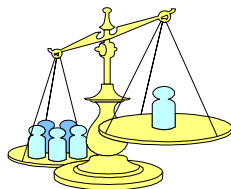


SPOTLIGHT ON WEIGHTS & MEASURES

SONOMA COUNTY SEALER OF WEIGHTS AND MEASURES



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COMPLAINTS

Seven complaints were received this month. There were two gasoline dispenser complaints, two electric meter complaints and one vapor meter complaint from mobile home parks, and two quantity control complaints.

DEVICES

The two electric meter complaints were registered because the complainants believed their meters were incorrect because of high electric bills.

The meters were tested at the source and found to be accurate. However, one meter had been misread, which accounted for the high bill.

A vapor meter was brought into our lab on a complaint and is being held in our climate-controlled room for 24 hours before it can be tested for accuracy.

The other complaints were gasoline pumps, which were tested and found accurate.

QUANTITY CONTROL

A complaint on short quantity of Blue-Emu pain relief cream was received. The complainant noticed a large bubble in the

contents when the jar was opened and thought it was short weight. The jar was labeled Net

Wt. 4 oz. A jar of the product was weighed, the contents removed and the

jar re-weighed to get a tare weight on the container holding the product. Once a tare was established, the jars at a number of stores were weighed and found to be the stated weight.

A customer also complained about short weight frozen chicken breasts. An audit was done on all the packages of the same brand of chicken, and all were found to be within weight tolerance. The complaint occurred because the buyer felt the amount of chicken did not complete the recipe once it was cooked. The chicken was found to be an "Enhanced" product. "Enhanced" is the term processors use when the chicken is injected with a broth and can equal 15% of the weight. USDA regulations require us to count this enhancement as chicken when we conduct our weight compliance tests, as long as it stays in the chicken. If it weeps from the meat it becomes tare, or part of the packaging.

WHAT'S NEW

Biodiesel is the newest environmentally friendly fuel being produced with recycled vegetable oils and other plants and seeds. It

produces reduced emissions, renewable energy, and smells like French fries.

Weights & Measures uses fuel standards created by American Society of Testing Materials (ASTM), but since biodiesel is not a petroleum product it still comes under our laws regulating compression fuels. The state is currently working with this new industry to create standards regarding the fuel. Biodiesel can be mixed with regular diesel at a 20/80 ratio, a 40/80, any other ratio, or used as a 100% diesel product. The problem in using the diesel in older vehicles is that its properties act as a detergent which cleans any build up of material in the engine, and the filters must be changed often until all the dirt is purged from the engine.

CONGRATULATIONS

Jeff Yparraguirre, our newest inspector, passed both the Division of Measurement Standards' Weighing and Measuring exams and has been assigned a county inspection district. Great work, Jeff!

CONSUMER CORNER

Q: How often are measuring devices inspected by Weights and Measures?

A. The county is mandated to test the devices at least once every year, however; due to personnel shortages the devices can be put on a variable frequency schedule. This program requires state approval. The history of each establishment is reviewed and those with the highest compliance records can be checked less frequently, while those with a history of non-compliance are checked more frequently.

CONSUMER TIP

Before buying bulk commodities, such as soil mixes, bark chips or other landscaping materials, understand what a volume should look like. Most products are sold by the cubic yard. One cubic yard is 27 cubic feet, 3 feet wide on each side and 3 feet high. That same volume will fill a 5-foot by 6-foot truck bed 10 3/4 inches high. To determine the volume of a truck or trailer in cubic feet, measure the length and width for the square feet and divide that number in to 27 to show the height the material should reach (in decimal feet) to equal one cubic yard. A quick conversion from inches to decimal feet is 3 inches = .25 foot; 6 inches = .50 foot; 9 inches = .75 foot; 12 inches = 1 foot.

When at the landscape dealer, always ask what the volume of the scoop loader is. When we test loader buckets for landscape product sellers, we issue a certificate stating the volume. Most loaders are calibrated to a specific volume level with the top edge of the scoop. Occasionally, the volume will be a fraction of a cubic yard and the loader will have to heap the measure or add extra to deliver the requested amount.

Remember too, that the sale is complete when the product is loaded. Most landscape products compress and compact during transportation as small air voids are filled.

Before visiting the materials seller, measure your truck or trailer so you will know whether you received the amount expected at the time it is loaded.