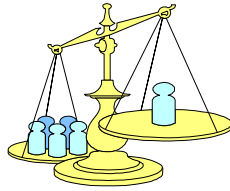


SPOTLIGHT ON WEIGHTS & MEASURES

SONOMA COUNTY SEALER OF WEIGHTS AND MEASURES



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September 2003

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COMPLAINTS

Seven consumer complaints were received this month. There were four gasoline dispenser complaints, one bad gas complaint, and two quantity control complaints.

DEVICES

Three complaints were for gasoline overcharges. All dispensers were tested and all were found to be within tolerance. A complaint that a pump “jumped” and registered gas and a monetary amount before the consumer began pumping was checked and the inspector was unable to replicate the “jump”. There are a number of reasons for a dispenser to register product and money before dispensing gasoline. A pump that has not been used in a long time, usually days, may have a small control valve leak. Another reason could be a leak in the vapor recovery hose that returns the product to the storage tank.

PETROLEUM

A complaint of “bad gas”, or incorrect octane, was received. The complainant felt his car began running roughly after gassing up. A sample of gasoline was taken and sent to the California Division of Measurement Standards laboratory. The

results found that the sample had the correct octane and no contamination was found.

QUANTITY CONTROL

The first complaint was that a deli didn’t have any prices posted and prices varied when a purchase was made. An inspection revealed that all prices were posted and the correct amount was being charged.

The other complaint was registered against a department store. The consumer returned a clothing item and used the credit against the purchase of a more expensive clothing item. In addition, the consumer wanted to use a 20% off coupon. The salesclerk rang the return first, then the item being purchased, then the 20% discount. However, the 20% was calculated on the net price after the returned amount was deducted, not on the original price of the item being purchased. This resulted in a sizeable overcharge. An inspector verified this practice. A Notice of Violation was issued. An investigation is being conducted to determine if this practice is widespread.

CRUSH IN THE WINE COUNTRY

It is grape harvest time, once again. There is usually a last minute rush from growers and wineries that need their scales tested before harvest. This year has not been an

exception. All of the inspectors are scrambling to keep up with the demand. Many scales can be tested prior to the crush, but an increasing number of wineries rent scales just prior to harvest, resulting in a glut of last minute inspections.

CONSUMER CORNER

How do growers know if they are receiving the correct price for their grapes when they aren't present during delivery and weighing?

Scale operators must have a current Weighmaster License from the California Department of Measurement Standards. Additional deputies may be on the license to record weights on Weighmaster Certificates.

All transactions, when the buyer or seller is not present, must have a Weighmaster Certificate accompanying it. The accurate weight, measure, or count must be entered on consecutively numbered certificates, as well as the commodity, date, and signature of the licensed Weighmaster. These certificates are kept for four years and are subject to inspection by Weights & Measures officials.

CONSUMER TIPS

When purchasing a large number of items, keep a mental count of the number of products that have a discount. When the items are checked out, make sure your receipt has the correct number of discounts.

