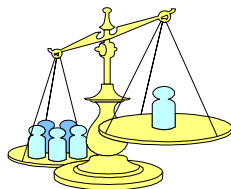


SPOTLIGHT ON WEIGHTS & MEASURES

SONOMA COUNTY SEALER OF WEIGHTS AND MEASURES



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January 2004

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HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL

COMPLAINTS

Considering all the shopping for Christmas gifts and the increased gas purchases during traveling, only five complaints were received in December, three of them were against service stations.

A customer complained that \$20.00 filled her gas tank then another time \$20.00 brought the indicator up to only $\frac{3}{4}$ capacity on her gas gage. The station was tested and the pumps were found to be accurate. The difference on the amount she received could have been the price of the fuel during the purchases and the amount of gas that was still in the tank. Car fuel tanks and gauges are not calibrated. They provide a good indication of capacity, but are not precise.

Bad gas complaints were reported from two different stations in Rohnert Park. The storage tanks at each location were checked for water, which turned out negative, and samples were taken and sent to the State Lab in Sacramento for analysis. One station was found to have the gasoline adulterated with diesel fuel, and another had the diesel fuel contaminated with gasoline. The products were ordered off sale until the

systems were purged and the fresh product inspected.

A complaint on a high electric bill was checked, and the meter was correct. The meter had not been read for a couple of months, because it was inaccessible, so the charges were combined into one bill.

The last complaint was a quart of milk that scanned higher than the posted price. When the inspector investigated the complaint, they found out that it had been resolved.

QUANTITY CONTROL

A letter to the editor of the Press Democrat was written regarding scanning overcharges. The person stated that industry has not been able to police itself and the state of California is unwilling or unable to be a viable police force.

We responded that the California Division of Measurement Standards and the County of Sonoma Division of Weights & Measures has a scanner price verification program. We have five inspectors who are responsible for a variety of programs. Two of the five inspectors' duties are to perform scanner audits. Generally, each store is audited at least once a year on a routine basis. When there is a complaint or where problems were

Quantity Control Continued

found during a previous inspection, the store is checked more often.

So far this year, even with the limited staff, there have been 21 fines issued from \$100.00 to \$1,000.00, depending on the severity of the overcharges and prior audits. We have also forwarded a number of cases to the Consumer Law Division of the District Attorney's Office. In some cases involving multiple counties of Weights and Measures and District Attorney's offices, the penalties and restitution ranged between \$1 million and \$2 million.

In defense of the stores, they are doing a much better job than in the past, and most have self-auditors or price coordinators verifying prices and signs.

The latest settlement on Dec. 16th was for short weight bags of fertilizer. Six counties: Sonoma, Ventura, Santa Barbara, Solano, Sacramento, & Fresno as well as the City Attorney of San Diego and the State of California, were involved in the investigation and prosecution of the short weight violation. A total of 140,000 bags of fertilizer were pulled from distribution out of 3 million bags for sale.

The packer, Hydro Agri North America agreed to pay a \$2,029,000.00 settlement for the violation. Out of that, \$105,000.00 in restitution to customers and \$224,000.00 to facilitate enforcement of consumer protection laws. Hydro Agri North America is a subsidiary of Norsk Hydro ASA of Oslo, Norway. They employ roughly 43,000 workers in 60 countries.

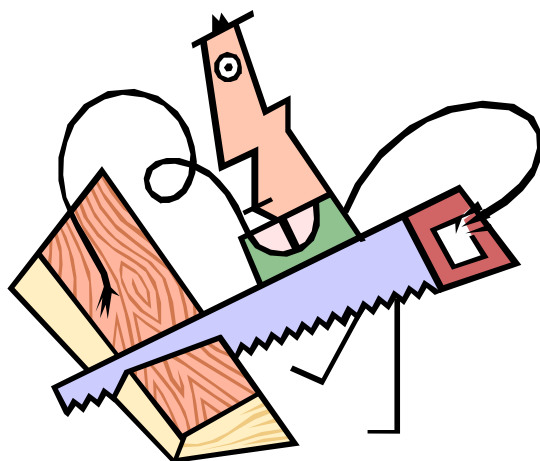
No, not 16. Gold is measured in Troy pounds, which only has 12 ounces. But a Troy pound is 21.5% heavier than an avoirdupois (conventional) pound.

Confusing? Most precious metals, including gold, are sold by grams to make it easier.

Why isn't a 2 x 4 piece of lumber not 2 inches by 4 inches?

The measurements for both nominal and actual dimensions conform to standards set by the American Softwood Lumber Standards, a trade organization. The actual size is also different depending whether the wood is dry or green lumber. Dry lumber is defined as lumber with less than 19 percent moisture, and unseasoned or green is greater than 19 percent. The actual size of a 2 X 4 after milling and drying is 1 ½ by 3 ½ inches. There is no allowance for loss of length through milling or drying.

Legal metrology recognizes some industry standards, as long as they are broad based and widely accepted.



CONSUMER CORNER

How many ounces are there in a pound of GOLD?