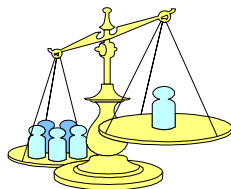


SPOTLIGHT ON WEIGHTS & MEASURES

SONOMA COUNTY SEALER OF WEIGHTS AND MEASURES



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DEVICES

January was a busy month testing scales and gas pumps. There were 286 computing scales tested. Twenty-three of the scales tested were found out of order. These scales are commercial devices found in grocery stores and deli markets. Twenty-two gas dispensers, out of 350, were tested and found out of tolerance.

Installation of the Bell Prover, a standard that measures the accuracy of gas meters used in mobile home parks and apartments, and the supporting lab was completed. It took some time to get the lab up and running since the November move to the new building. The lab and equipment must maintain a constant temperature within 2 degrees throughout a 24 hour period. These gas meters fall under Weights and Measures jurisdiction because the landlord buys the gas from PG & E or a propane company, and resells it to the tenants. Gas meters were stacking up as mobile home parks were waiting to get their meters sealed. The lab, which is a temperature compensated room, had to be set up with the Bell Prover, temperature gages, etc. in place and tested by a California Division of Measurement Standards technician for accuracy before the inspectors could use it. Charles Nelson, Division of Measurement Standard Specialist from Sacramento tested the Bell Prover to

make sure it was accurate and met all the required specifications. The Bell Prover passed all the tests and was certified by the State Division. Fifty-four gas meters were tested.

PETROLEUM

Two complaints worked on in January are ongoing investigations. One of the complaints was received shortly after the Thanksgiving holiday and the other began over the Christmas holidays.

The first complaint was a result of a random sample of diesel taken from a gas station in Glen Ellen by Shannon Priesendorfer, State Petroleum Investigator. The lab issued a report showing the sample had failed to meet the required specifications for diesel. The station had just completed some renovations, converting one of their three storage tanks to diesel and had installed new dispensers that blended the premium and regular for the mid-grade gasoline. It appeared the tank was not plumbed correctly and/or cleaned properly. The diesel dispensers were red-tagged and closed for sale to the public. A second sample was obtained and taken to the Division of Measurement Standard's lab for testing. The second sample also failed to meet the required specifications for diesel. The business pumped out the diesel from their storage tank.

PETROLEUM CONTINUED

The tanks were flushed and cleaned and more diesel was delivered. The sample failed to pass specifications. The lines were purged and Bay Area Air Quality Management District shut the station down for incorrect fuel venting and plumbing.

A sample of diesel was obtained from the delivery truck during one of the deliveries, and was found contaminated. The diesel was pumped out of the storage tank. After multiple samples were taken and diesel storage tank purging, the diesel finally passed the required specifications and the red tags were removed in early February.

The other complaint started during the Christmas holidays when the County offices were closed due to Mandatory Time Off (MTO). The complainant said she purchased gasoline and her car broke down. A second complaint came in a day later. The inspector drove to the station and took samples of the mid grade gasoline and the high-grade gasoline. Two truckers were there at the time pumping out the storage tanks and delivering new gas. The truckers and the station manager thought diesel had been delivered into the gasoline storage tank. The samples were taken, and sent to the lab in Los Angeles. The lab issued a report of substandard gasoline. We closed down both grades of gasoline. A Notice of Violation was issued to the station for sale of substandard gasoline. Four other complaints of cars breaking down were filed with the station. Another sample was obtained from the premium dispenser after the lines were purged. The second sample also failed to meet required specifications for premium gasoline. The company delivering the gasoline admitted fault in delivering the substandard gasoline into the storage tank.

The tanks were emptied and lines again flushed. The third delivery did pass lab

specifications and the dispensers were reopened for sale to the public.

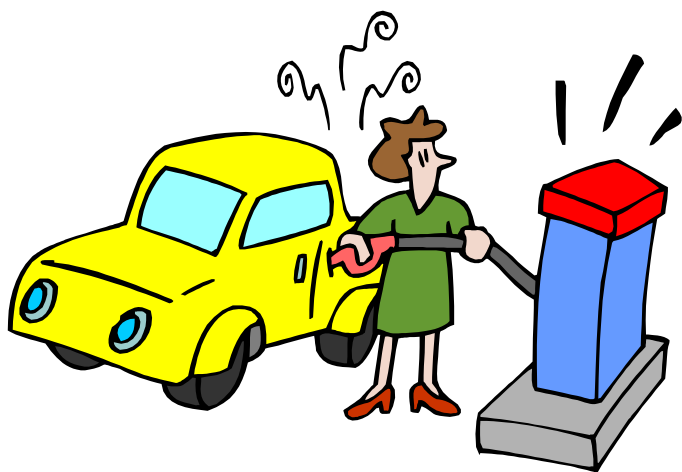
QUANTITY CONTROL

One of the Weights and Measures inspectors submitted a complaint regarding the possible dimensions of his new house being inaccurate. He thought that the square feet of the house that the company declared on the floor plan might be short measure. The appraiser had stated one figure for the square footage of the house and the floor plan dimensions differed. Two inspectors measured the dimensions of the house and found it to be in line with what the house was advertised as.

Another complaint came in from a family that suspected the check stand scales in a grocery store were inaccurate. The man and his son weighed produce using the hanging scales in the produce department. These scales have a non-commercial sign on them stating they are for approximate weight only and they are not tested and sealed by Weights and Measures. The complainant said the produce weighed differently when it was taken to the check stand scales. The complainant's seven-year-old son then took an item and weighed it on different check stand scales and said the weights varied. They asked the Assistant Manager to check the weight on all the other check stand scales. She said she checked the item on a couple of them and the scales agreed. Weights and Measures inspectors tested all the check stand scales in the store and the scales all weighed accurately and were sealed for 2004.

CONSUMER CORNER

What happens when I get bad gas? Low octane gas can cause performance loss and in severe situations damage to the engine. Water and sediment in gas can lead to fuel system plugging, corrosion and engine stalling. Contaminated gas is rare but does happen. If you purchase and fuel your car, and it stops, have your mechanic check it out. Keep your receipt from fueling, call the station to report the problem and call your local Weights and Measures Department right away so they can obtain a sample. Some gas stations have deliveries daily. Once a new delivery of gas is combined with the gas you bought it changes the sample and bad gas may be hard to detect.



CONSUMER TIP

Household Weights and Measures: To find the diameter of a circle multiply circumference by .31831. To find the circumference of a circle multiply diameter by 3.1416. To find the area of a circle multiply square of diameter by .7854.