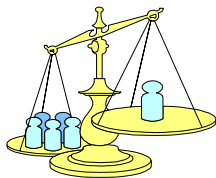


# SPOTLIGHT ON WEIGHTS & MEASURES

## SONOMA COUNTY SEALER OF WEIGHTS AND MEASURES



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### DEVICES

Mobile Home Parks have been bringing in gas and electric meters for testing. Many of the park's meters are either reaching or exceeding the ten-year test frequency. To insure timely inspections, a letter was sent reminding managers to submit meters for testing. The response was excellent and many meters are now being brought into compliance.

A total of 241 gas and electric meters were tested in May. There were 23-meter failures. Some of the meters that failed had been in harsh environments for years and the register failed to pass readability compliance. Still other meters failed accuracy tests. Some of the gas meters failed to pass the leak test. Tests are conducted, to see if the meter is leaking gas through a seam in the case or through the shaft of the register.

There were 146 scales tested in May. Five were small counter scales, 120 were computing scales, and 21 were hanging scales. Generally, the hanging scales are brought to the office, as farmers get ready to bring their produce to the Farmer's Market. Inspectors visited the Farmers Market on opening day to check unsealed scales as a convenience to the farmers. Three scales failed to pass the inspection. The compliance rate for all other scales was 98%.

A consumer complained about a gasoline dispenser at a station not tracking correctly and the readout on the inside console was registering a different amount. The result was the

complainant receiving an incorrect amount of change. The inspector tested the dispenser and found it accurate. This particular station has a cash receptor linked to the dispenser so customers do not have to go to the attendant to pay cash. However, if the capacity is reached and the dispenser stops pumping before the dollar amount is reached, the customer must go to the attendant to receive their change. The customer claimed the dispenser stopped before capacity was reached and the unit was re-set before he went to claim his change. A test buy was conducted and no discrepancy was noted.

### QUANTITY CONTROL

There were 345 lots of packaged commodities inspected in May with nine lots put off sale, totaling some 600 packages. One complaint was received regarding protein energy bars. An audit was performed at the store selling different brands of energy bars. A new product was found to be short of weight. There were five different varieties of this particular energy bar. All five lots were placed off sale for short weight.

Nine Notices of Violation were issued for violation of Business and Professions Code 12024: Selling in less quantity than represented. Thirty-one locations were audited for price verification. No major violations were detected. One hardware store settled a proposed penalty action after a brief office hearing.

One Notice of Violation was issued to a firewood dealer for the short measure of firewood

purchased as a result of a complaint in April. A hearing was held in May with the firewood dealer. He apologized for the problems and said he would make sure that his employees would be more careful with firewood deliveries. He also said he would take the necessary steps to ensure a full cord was delivered to the seller.

### EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION DAY

The Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer Department held an employee recognition day in May. Several employees were recognized for their outstanding contributions to their division.

Roy Caporale, who is retiring July 7, 2004, after 31 years of service, was recognized for his contribution in enhancing the Quantity Control Program.

Roy has been instrumental in discovering scanner violations and coordinating cooperation between County Weights and Measures and the District Attorney Offices. He initiated investigations resulting in multi-county violations. As a result, there have been cases settled amounting to several million dollars. The violators have taken steps to hire price coordinators and document self-monitoring and correction programs.

Roy has been a great asset to our department and we will miss his smile, sense of humor and Hawaiian shirts.

### CONSUMER TIPS

**When shopping for sale items, be especially alert on the first day and last day of the sale. This is often the time store computers may have missed some items being downloaded incorrectly or removed from sale too early.**

### CONSUMER CORNER

Summer is fast approaching and many people will be going to picnics, barbecuing etc. If you purchase ice from a large supermarket or a convenience store, the ice must have a quantity statement on it. Sometimes small stores and even gas stations sell ice in bags without a quantity statement. Any prepackaged commodity must have the quantity statement on it so the consumer knows how much they are getting for the price.

