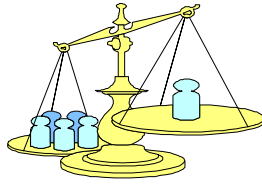


# SPOTLIGHT ON WEIGHTS & MEASURES

## SONOMA COUNTY SEALER OF WEIGHTS AND MEASURES



Lisa Correia  
Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer  
133 Aviation Blvd., Ste. 110, Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Mark Hanson  
Chief Deputy Sealer  
Phone (707) 565-2371

[http://www.sonoma-county.org/agcomm/weights\\_measures](http://www.sonoma-county.org/agcomm/weights_measures)

October 2004

Editor D. Keller

### Western Weights & Measures Conference

The 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Western Weights and Measures Association Technical Conference was held in Sacramento on September 12 - 16, 2004. The Western Weights & Measures Association was formed to promote equity in the marketplace in the exchange of goods and services by weight, measure or count; to provide technical and administrative education to the members in all areas of weights and measures. It also acts as a source of information and a forum for debate in assisting the National Conference of Weights and Measures and the National Institute of Standards and Technology in the development of consensus standards for weighing and measuring devices and commodities sold by weight, measure or count. The Western Association cooperates with the National Conference on Weights and Measures and the National Institute of Standards and Technology in promoting the use, by the member jurisdictions, of uniform laws, regulations, and administrative procedures adopted by the National Conference on Weights and Measures.

Sonoma County Weights and Measure staff attended two days of several meetings. The first day conference training was held on Price Verification, Service Agencies, petroleum products and enforcement actions. The second day conference training was done in field standards and test equipment. The second workshop was on NIST technical discussions

with Henry Opperman of NIST. In the afternoon they had an open forum to discuss relationships being formed between County Weights and Measures, Division of Measurement Standards and Consumer District Attorneys in order to further better the handling of cases that cross county lines and affect multiple counties. During these conference trainings there are also committee meetings going on to discuss regulations, specifications, tolerances and administration of Weights and Measures law and/or any proposals recommended for change.

### DEVICES

In September three complaints on gas dispensers were received. The meters are advancing at a very high speed and complainants often call concerned about getting charged more than they think they should be charged for the size of their gas tank. Our inspector investigating one complaint found the complainant had gotten more gas into their tank than paid for. The inspector tested the whole station and found eight meters over-delivering. Gas dispensers are placed out of order if they exceed the tolerance set by the Division of Measurement Standards in California; this is whether the errors are plus or minus. If the meter is found under-delivering the meter is red-tagged and the respondent is given 30 days to repair the device. If the dispenser is found over-delivering the respondent is still able to sell over the dispenser but they are given 10 days to repair the device. The other two complaints could not be verified.

## QUANTITY CONTROL

There were 445 lots checked last month for accurate quantity statements. Ten lots were rejected and placed off sale for being short weight. There were also six lots rejected because of labeling violations. These lots must have a responsibility statement, i.e. who is responsible for these contents. All packages must have a quantity statement on them allowing the customer to compare prices and the quantity that they are buying. The purpose of these regulations is to provide accurate and adequate information on packages as to the identity and quantity of contents so that purchasers can make price and quantity comparisons.

If a lot is found short weight or lacking the required information, a lot is placed "Off Sale" and the retailer or wholesaler must either return the lot to the packer or correct the problem at the location where it was found.

We received two firewood complaints in September. A consumer complained regarding a company advertising firewood by the pickup load. The inspector informed the company that they would have to remove the sign referencing pick-up load. If the company is going to advertise the firewood for sale they must sell by the cord, half-cord, or fraction of a cord. However, if a customer comes in and makes an agreement with the company for an agreed upon amount of firewood to be sold to them, it is okay for the company to sell the firewood.

The other complaint on firewood was from a buyer who ordered a half-cord and suspected the firewood was short measure. The firewood was measured by the inspectors and found 14% short of one-half cord. The Firewood dealer was contacted and notified of the shortage. He agreed to deliver more firewood to the buyer to make up for the shortage. A receipt was not given to the buyer and a Notice of Violation was issued to the dealer for that violation.

## CONSUMER TIPS

When you purchase meat, cheese, or salads at a delicatessen, look at the scale when the clerk is weighing the product. Make sure the items weighed in front of you either have no wrapping or container or the scale has a "tare" on it. A tare includes the weight of all the material, substances used to package or wrap the product in which you are purchasing for consumption. For example, the weight of a carton or container should be deducted if purchasing salads. A clerk will deduct the container or wrappings when you purchase them, so you have to look at the readout of the scale to see the "tare" deducted.

## CONSUMER CORNER

### HOW TO AVOID GETTING BURNED WHEN BUYING FIREWOOD

It is firewood season again and a time to remind purchasers to take caution in purchasing and burning firewood.

When buying firewood make sure to get a receipt that shows seller's name and address as well as the price, the amount, and the kind of wood purchased. If possible, write down the license number of the truck delivering the wood. Firewood is to be sold by the cord or fraction of a cord. A seller may not legitimately use terms such as "truckload", "rack" or "pile" because these terms have no legally defined meaning and you have no way of determining how much firewood you are actually receiving. A cord is 128 cubic feet. For example a "stack" should be 4X4X8 feet or 2X4X16 feet.

Today's EPA certified woodstoves are much better at heating than earlier stoves. They also reduce particle matter as well as carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, and volatile organics. Burning well-seasoned wood that has dried for at least six months will burn cleaner. It is also recommended that a small hot fire be built first to preheat the chimney and build a bed of coals. It is wise to have the chimney cleaned periodically depending on the frequency of use and quality of wood.