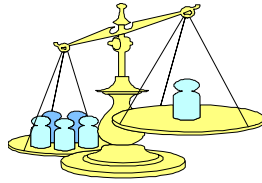


SPOTLIGHT ON WEIGHTS & MEASURES

SONOMA COUNTY SEALER OF WEIGHTS AND MEASURES



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Editor D. Keller

DEVICES

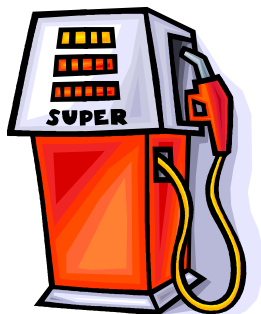
Truck meters were tested in October, with six being sealed in preparation for the winter season. Two meters were placed out of order and red tagged.

There were 330 gasoline dispensers inspected in October, 92% were in compliance on the initial inspection.

Twelve taxicabs were inspected in October with three of the cabs failing to pass the inspection. They were red-tagged. Taxicabs are tested using a fifth-wheel mounted behind the cab that measures the distance.

COMPLAINTS

Seven complaints were received regarding suspected overcharges at the gas pumps. With the price per gallon being so high it is not unusual to receive multiple complaints. None of the seven complaints could be verified as all dispensers passed the required tests.



QUANTITY CONTROL

Four complaints came into the office regarding overcharges at registers in retail stores. Audits were done, and three of the four complaints were verified. Notices of Violation were issued to each of three stores. A follow-up will be done on each store to see if there is an ongoing problem with their prices. If there is a continued problem, it is possible a civil penalty can be issued to the store.

Eleven Notices of Violation were issued in quantity control for labeling violations. There were 11 lots placed off sale because of labeling violations. Most of these violations pertained to no quantity statement on packaged items. All prepacked items must contain a quantity statement on the package. These are Federal-labeling requirements that are required in order to make packages uniform and give the customer a chance to compare values.

There were 10 lots rejected in October for violation of Business and Professions Code 12024.3, which is offering a package for sale that is in less quantity than represented. Of these 10 lots rejected, there were 97 packages pulled from the shelves that had to be corrected because they were short weight.

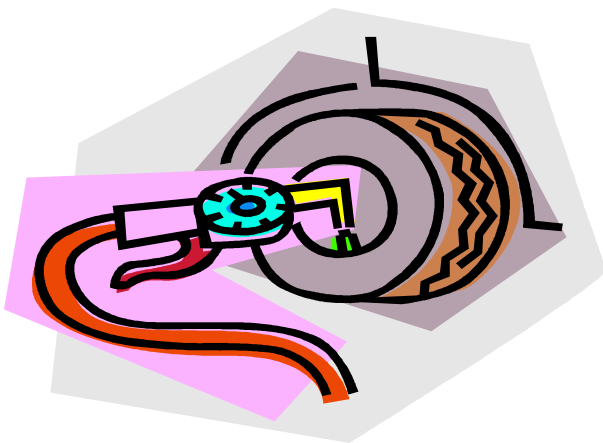
CONSUMER TIPS

Last week the Michael Finney Channel 7 ABC show talked about the California requirement for gas stations to supply air and water to customers.

As of January 1, 2000 every station in California is required to provide, during operating hours, water and air to the public at no cost if the consumer is fueling their vehicle at that station. The service station is required to post a sign in a conspicuous place at or near the dispensing apparatus, which states that the station is to provide free air and water for automotive purposes to its customers who purchase motor vehicle fuel. The sign must also state that the customer should contact the station attendant or call a toll free number for complaints.

If the customer does not purchase fuel at the station the station can charge for the air or water.

Sonoma County inspectors check to make sure stations are in compliance with these requirements when they do their initial inspection of the dispensers for the year. Also, if a complaint comes into the office, the inspectors will immediately go out and check the station to see if the station is in compliance.



OUTREACH

Chief Deputy Sealer, Mark Hanson, addressed the California Consumer Affairs Association (CCAA) Conference on the importance of an involved and forceful Weights & Measures program.

CCAA is an association of agencies that enforce consumer regulations. The Association includes representatives from district attorneys, district attorney investigators and mediators, small claims court advisors, the California Department of Consumer Affairs, the Public Utilities Commission, the Bureau of Automotive Repair, and the Postal Inspection Service, among others.

Most delegates were familiar with Weights & Measures to the extent of checkstand scales and fuel pumps inspections. Many also learned that we inspect devices such as taximeters, cement scales, aircraft re-fuelers, electric, gas vapor, water utility meters, and livestock scales. In addition we test the quality of petroleum fuels, measure bulk commodities such as firewood, wine grapes, and landscape supplies; and that we verify scanner pricing systems.

Other speakers represented the state BAR Association, Public Utilities Commission, the Attorney Generals' Office, FBI, Congress of California Seniors, and the media. State Senator Liz Figueroa stressed the importance that consumer rights are an integral part of our free market system.

Congratulations to Jim Schrum, investigator for the Sonoma County District Attorney's Environmental and Consumer Crimes Unit, who was elected Vice President of the Northern Chapter of CCAA.