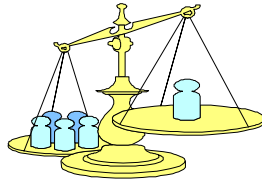


# SPOTLIGHT ON WEIGHTS & MEASURES

## SONOMA COUNTY SEALER OF WEIGHTS AND MEASURES



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### Year End

Another year is quickly coming to a close and Christmas is around the corner. Do you ever wonder, with the excitement of the year-end holidays, family gatherings, etc., are people just too busy to take the time to pay attention to their non-gift purchases? During this busy time, Weights and Measures is still out there checking packages, verifying price integrity at stores, and conducting tests on commodities, checking scales and gas dispensers.

Have you ever rolled out and measured your wrapping paper and ribbon or count the number of bows in the bag you bought? Did you get the product you expected from a carton of eggnog? What about that little holiday wine you purchased or bottle of rum? Did you cook your ham or turkey on Thanksgiving for your family based on the weight on the label? Were you satisfied that the amount of fruitcake, dried fruits, nuts and candy you purchased met the stated quantity statement on the package? The product looks so lovely in their fancy packages, but did you notice that these packaged goods can sometimes cost the consumer seven, eight, maybe ten dollars or more per pound? Are you running to the store to pick up that special item for that special person because the store has it on sale? Did you get the correct percentage off that sale item?

Have you purchased logs or small quantities of

firewood at the grocery store to warm your family during the cold evenings? Did you measure the logs or bundled firewood to see if it contains the cubic feet that is labeled on the package? Are you staying warm by turning up your heater? Gas and electric usage is up now that the weather is colder; did your landlord or delivery company give you an itemized bill showing the meter readings, service length and dates, and rate schedule for your heating gas or electricity?

Gasoline prices are still high. Did you check that the price advertised on the street sign is the same price the pump computes? Is your holiday trip going smoothly? No vehicle breakdowns due to contaminated fuel?

These are just some examples of the concerns/complaints that the Weights and Measures Division handles throughout the year. The emphasis on certain inspections is kept flexible to allow us to concentrate on the devices in use and commodities for sale at any time of the year. Violations have been found for each of the examples given above throughout the year. In November we had 13 complaints from consumers on some of these various items listed. The holidays are a fun, crazy and busy time, but slow down, take a deep breath and be careful out there. If you think you are being taken advantage of, call us, we will be happy to look into it for you!

## QUANTITY CONTROL

We received a complaint concerning a large concrete pour in November. A commercial contractor purchased several hundred cubic yards of concrete and suspected it may have been short measured. The amount delivered did not match the amount estimated by the site engineer. The "batch" plant hopper scale was checked by Weights and Measures staff and found to be accurate. Our inspectors reviewed the plans the contractor used and it became clear why the contractor was concerned: the plans and the amount of concrete delivered did not agree. Concrete is a product that is sold by the cubic yard. A customer should be careful when measuring the area where the concrete is to be poured. A difference in thickness of only 1 inch in a 10 foot by 30 foot slab equates to nearly 1 extra (or 1 fewer) cubic yard. Concrete is not cheap, it can run \$100.00 per cubic yard so it is understandable that accurate measurements are important. Once the concrete is poured it is difficult to verify the amount delivered. We are continuing to investigate this complaint.

## CONSUMER TIPS

If you purchase fuel for your vehicle and suspect the fuel was bad, IMMEDIATELY call Weights and Measures at 565-2371.

Some service stations get deliveries of fuel daily, so the fuel you buy there today may be gone tomorrow. It is important that Weights and Measures takes a sample from the same dispenser the consumer has purchased from. If a delivery was made since the complainant's purchase, the sample will not be the same quality as the fuel the complainant purchased. If it is not the same, it will be very hard to prove that the complainant's fuel was bad. Normally, when gas or diesel is contaminated, there will be multiple complaints from consumers. Last December a delivery driver twice unloaded diesel into a gasoline storage tank. We had to

close the dispensers for nearly a week until the state lab cleared the samples.

Another tip is to be careful when fueling at multi-grade dispensers that have a diesel nozzle next to a gasoline nozzle. We have had complainants who assume they have diesel-contaminated gasoline. What happened is that inadvertently they used the wrong nozzle and put the diesel nozzle into their tank instead of the gasoline nozzle, which was directly next to it.

## CONSUMER CORNER

When I bring in my Christmas packages to UPS, FedEx, or other shipping company to deliver does the shipping scale have to be placed where I can see the weight? YES, commercial scales are required to be positioned in the customer's view.

*Happy Holidays*

