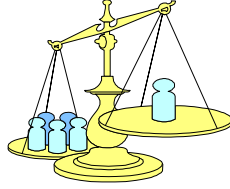


# SPOTLIGHT ON WEIGHTS & MEASURES

## SONOMA COUNTY SEALER OF WEIGHTS AND MEASURES



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### HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL

The Division of Weights and Measures wants to wish our community members a happy and prosperous New Year.

The New Year always begins with budget planning. There is a glimmer of hope at the end of the State's budget crunch. Some tough budget choices have to be made at the state level by both the Governor and the State Legislature, and locally by the Board of Supervisors. These choices may affect all of the services and support that we have come to expect.

State budget issues affect all Sonoma County departments. Even though we have only two state contracts that bring in about \$10,000 per year, we count on that amount to cover some costs. Our goal within the Weights and Measures Division is to continue to provide the highest level of service possible as we navigate the budget. We feel the public gets it's money's worth from our programs, as the cost per capita is approximately \$1.50.

### DECEMBER 2004 COMPLAINTS

Though the month of December tends to be a busy month for all of us, we received an average amount of monthly complaints. The majority of the complaints are related to service

stations. We received seven service station complaints, which six of were made by people who believed they did not get the full amount of fuel they paid for. Each complaint was investigated, but the inspectors were not able to verify or replicate the particulars of the complaint. The seventh complaint was related to a liquid propane dispenser located at a service station. The complainant stated, there was "No price per gallon" posted and the propane meter was not functioning properly. The inspector's investigation determined that the business did have a price sign at the corner of the intersection and the propane meter was functioning properly. A notice was given to the service station to place a price sign at the fill-location to prevent any future confusion for their customers.

### QUANTITY CONTROL & PRICE VERIFICATION

In December we received four complaints related to possible overcharges. Of these four complaints, our inspector was able to verify two of them. The two inspections resulted in issuing a Notice of Violation (NOV) to the businesses involved with the complaint. A Notice of Proposed Action/fine (NOPA) was issued to the business with the most egregious overcharges.

## YEAR 2004 IN REVIEW

This last year our new Agriculture Commissioner/Sealer was appointed to head the County's Department of Agriculture and Sealer Weights and Measures. Lisa Correia was promoted from within the department and became the first woman appointed to the post in this county's history. Lisa is committed to customer service through an effective enforcement program.



## CONSUMER CORNER

Have you ever noticed that when you fuel your vehicle with gasoline at different stations, not all the gasoline grade names use the same terminology?

The majority of 87 octane fuels are branded "Unleaded Regular" but some stations refer to this grade as "Unleaded Plus". The 89 octane or "Unleaded Plus" is sometimes branded "Performance Plus" by some service stations. The same can be said of the 91 octane fuels. Some service stations brand their grades either "Super", "Premium", "High Performance" or now "V-power". The octane rating is a true indication of the grade of fuel that you are purchasing and a better indicator of what you are really buying.

Along with the different grade names that you have to be cognizant of, you also have to be aware of the position of the grade on multi-hose dispensers. The various octane selector buttons do not always go from left to right in

increasing octane rating. Some service stations place their "Regular" dispenser hoses in the middle and sometimes on the right. State law requires that service stations clearly label their dispensers and to follow all labeling requirements. The law does not include any requirement for placing dispenser hoses in any particular grade order.



## CONSUMER TIP

What is the final sale price for items that are regularly priced at \$19.99 and has a sale discount of 20%, plus "Take an additional 10% off at the register"? This is not an easy computation to do in your head. When you are out shopping the sales, and you buy several items that are discounted in this manner, it is a good idea to review your receipt as soon as convenient and use a calculator to confirm the discounts equal the true sale price.

In our example, the proper calculation is: 20% off \$19.99 equals a price of \$15.99. An additional 10% off of \$15.99 equals a final price of \$14.39. It is a mistake to assume 20% and 10% equal a 30% "off" the regular price and to expect to pay only \$11.99.