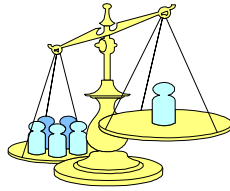


SPOTLIGHT ON WEIGHTS & MEASURES

SONOMA COUNTY SEALER OF WEIGHTS AND MEASURES



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FAREWELL TO DIANE KELLER

Announcing the retirement of Diane Keller, Senior Standards Specialist. Diane was with Weights and Measures for 30 years. During the January dinner honoring all long-term county employees, Supervisor Tim Smith pointed out that Diane rose through the ranks from support staff to become the first female Weights and Measures Inspector. Diane credited the late Sealer Gene Bologna with encouraging her to take the license exams and apply her skills in a new role.

Diane was not intimidated working in a male dominated industry because of her strong personality, keen sense of right and wrong, and her assertiveness when dealing with the public and co-workers. Diane had worked every program in the division from jeweler's scales to driving the heavy weight trucks and from petroleum pumps to taxicabs. Eventually she specialized in Quantity Control, where she conducted tests on packaged products as varied as: meat, milk, firewood, cosmetics, paint, textiles, soil amendments, candy, bread, and animal feed.

When price verification inspections were initiated, Diane helped develop a frequency of inspection, as well as documentation of compliance and violations. She also worked with the District Attorney's Office to pursue serious violations to successful settlements.

Once the legislature authorized the Administrative Civil Penalty process to be managed by the Sealer, Diane learned the steps to implement due process. She wrote many Notices of Proposed Actions describing the violation and to what extent consumers were harmed. She also alternated as editor of this newsletter.

Diane is a valued colleague and we do not want to lose her expertise. We hope to retain her as extra-help to assist in completing some of the projects she began and to conduct training with her successor.

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What significance does the number 231 have in the sale of petroleum fuels? This number 231 should be remembered for two reasons. The first is 231 is the number of cubic inches in one gallon. The other reason to remember 231 is at a price of \$2.31 per gallon, one cubic inch of fuel has a value of \$0.01.

The tolerance for accuracy of a retail fuel meter is +/- 6 cubic inches (a little more than a 1/3 of a cup) per 5-gallon draft. The maximum variation translates to a \$0.06 value per 5-gallon sale. Does this amount have a significant impact on businesses and consumers? Yes, considering the cumulative impact the monetary implications are obvious especially as the cost of fuel rises.

231 (Cont.)

How much variation should be considered tolerance is a technical question. Tolerances are a necessary part of commerce because they are based on the accuracy and repeatability of the device used to determine the quantity. In other words, a fuel meter cannot hold a tighter tolerance over a longer period of time. As regulators we have to accept the limitations of the device designs.

In addition to regulations, which prescribe tolerances for each device type, we also test and license service agents. These service agents maintain and adjust the devices to be as close to zero as practicable.

The monitoring and adjustments by service agents have improved overall compliance, and inspections reveal only about 5% of fuel meters have an error beyond the tolerances.



CONSUMER TIP

One way to track the money value computation of a fuel meter is to release the trigger and pause the delivery at 10 gallons. Compare the price per gallon to the total price Display, the total price should show 10 times the price per gallon, just move the decimal point to the right one place. One point of caution: the total gallons must equal exactly 10.000. Any volume more or less than 10.000 will not give the exact computation.

Example: 10.000 Gallons X \$2.319 per gallon
= \$23.19 Total Price.

