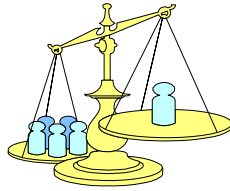


SPOTLIGHT ON WEIGHTS & MEASURES

SONOMA COUNTY SEALER OF WEIGHTS AND MEASURES



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July 2005

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COMPLAINTS

In June 2005 we had 11 complaints filed. Below are a few of the complaints our office received.

Quantity Control/Pricing on “Sale”

A customer was overcharged for one cantaloupe and undercharged for another at a grocery store.

Each error canceled the other out in the total amount. The complainant, the inspector, and the store manager were quite confounded and were unsuccessful in duplicating or finding a plausible explanation for the discrepancy. The computer anomaly will continue to be monitored by Weights and Measures and the grocery store manager.

Another incident involved a sale price versus an advertised price. A local video store advertised one price for previously viewed videos and charged the customer a higher price. The sale sign advertised a discount for multiple purchases, 4 for \$20. The consumer was charged \$7.50 per video, which equals \$15 for 2. The store manager agreed to take the sign down after the Weights and Measures inspector explained the advertisement requirements under California State law.



Measuring Devices

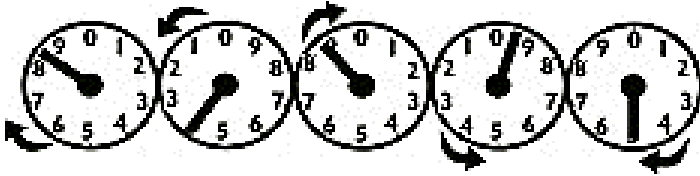
One of the numerous complaints received revolved around an electric meter at a mobile home park. The tenant's use had increased about a third of what it normally registers. She suspected a bad electric meter and wanted our inspectors to verify the accuracy of the meter. One of our inspectors went out and tested the meter determining it was functioning properly and was within tolerance. Upon further inspection it was suspected that the possible cause of the increase was do to an incorrect meter reading.

Incorrect meter reading often happen with older electric meters. They are designed with dials that turn in opposing directions, which are challenging to read when the number “9” is indicated.

To read your meter start with the dial on the right and read to the left, writing down the number the pointer has just passed on each dial. Note that the pointers on the dials move either clockwise or counterclockwise. You can tell by the way the numbers are arranged. If the pointer on the dial falls between two numbers, read the smaller number. If the pointer falls directly on a number – say seven– read it as a seven if the pointer on the immediate right has passed zero.

COMPLAINTS (CONT.)

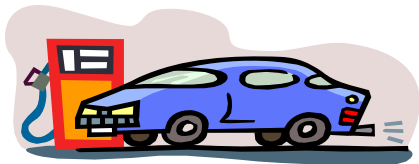
For an example of a meter reading, see the diagram below.



Meter reads? -- 83895 Kwts.

The majority of our other complaints dealt with gasoline stations. Several complainants reported that they were able to pump more fuel into their cars' fuel tank than what their owner's manual indicated.

The fuel dispensers were found to be within tolerance requirements. Because of this no enforcement action was necessary by the Weights and Measures Office.



Another complaint dealt with a fuel advertisement sign. This sign was found displayed in front of a regular gasoline station that is in close proximity to a card lock station. A card lock station is not required to advertise their fuel prices because it is a "membership only" business. These types of businesses may offer different prices to their members. In this incident, the Weights and Measures inspector found the advertisement sign to be clearly marked and within sign requirements as prescribed by California law.

CONSUMER TIP

Below are definitions of terms that are important to commerce:

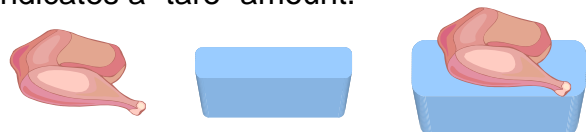
Tare is the packaging material that contains the product or commodity sold. Tare can be

wrappers, ice glaze or water, an apple box, grape gondola, or empty cement truck. Tare is very important in the selling of products by weight. An example would be the plastic tray holding potato salad. The plastic tray weight is tare and should not be counted in the net weight that is charged to the consumer.

Another example would be the weight of the tray container that holds chicken breast offered for sale. The tray would be considered tare. A large majority of products that are sold by weight are packaged in a container of some sort. The container weight must not be included in the weight being charged to the consumer.

Gross weight is the product net weight plus the tare weight. Net weight is the usable commodity – what you pay for.

Here is an example illustrating the importance of being aware of what the tare weight is at the check stand. If you buy shrimp in a foam tub at your local grocery store and the tare weight of the container is not subtracted from the gross weight, you will pay extra for the container. For shrimp being sold at \$7.00 per pound and an average tare weight of 0.04 lb. for a tray, you will pay an extra \$0.28 regardless of the amount of shrimp you purchase. Whether you buy a quarter pound or a whole pound of shrimp, you may be charged for the tare weight if you are not observant. Watch that the scale shows "tare" or the fresh pack meat label indicates a "tare" amount.



Net weight + tare weight = gross weight
(product) + (package) = gross weight

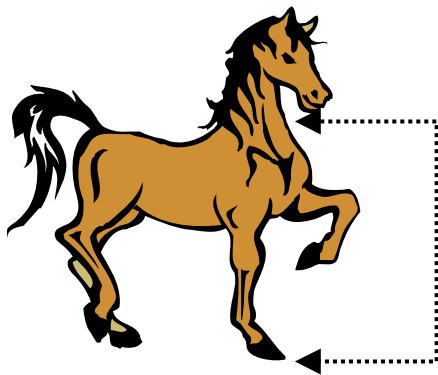
Remember, don't pay for the tare weight, pay only for the net weight.

WEIGHTS & MEASURES HISTORY

The United States Congress has the power to fix uniform standards for weights and measures. Today in the United States the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) supplies standards to all of the states.

Weighing and measuring applications are found throughout history and were initially established through the use of some acceptable standard such as the length of a king's hand or foot. A variation of these measurements is still used today when speaking of a horse's height.

Horses and ponies are measured from the ground to the withers and are measured in "hands". The reason for this is that originally horses were measured by the width of a person's hand, which was approximately 4 inches. By placing one hand on the ground, the other above it and moving the first hand over the second the horse could be measured. The term used for height is "hands high" or "hh". Often the height is just over a number of hands e.g. 16 hands and 2 inches and the height is referred to as 16.2 hh.



**16.2 hands high (hh)
= 66 inches
= 5 feet 6 inches**



Have a safe summer