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Spotlight on Weights & Measures



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COMPLAINTS

We had 11 consumer complaints in the month of January, and a few of them were particularly interesting. We received a complaint from a disgruntled customer of a local laundromat business. She felt that she was not getting the full time that the washers and dryers had posted on them. The complainant said her clothes were not fully dried. Upon inspection of 4 washers and 6 dryers, it was discovered that one of the washers was coming up short measure by a couple of minutes, just enough to cause the machine to be placed 'Out of Order' by the inspector because it failed tolerances for a timing device. The business owner was told to have the device repaired so that it would deliver the amount of time it advertised, and the corrections were made.

A gas complaint, filed by an observant consumer, turned up a gasoline dispenser that had a hose leak causing the vapor recovery system to siphon off fuel after the nozzle handle had been released. This device was "Red Tagged" and the business was given a "Notice of Violation" because of the complainant, and the attendant indicated that the owner knew the device was operating incorrectly but chose to keep it in use. Knowingly using an incorrect device for commerce is a misdemeanor and a violation of State Law.

Recycle: Save Money and Resources

California's Beverage Container and Recycling and Liter Reduction Act defines a "beverage" as beer and other malt beverages, wine and distilled spirit coolers (containing no more than 7% alcohol by volume), carbonated water (including soda and carbonated mineral water), noncarbonated soft drinks and "sports" drinks, coffee and tea drinks, carbonated and noncarbonated fruit drinks, and vegetable juice in beverage containers 16 ounces or less. Why should this be of concern to you as a consumer? Because chances are, you as the consumer have on occasion consumed a "beverage" of one sort or another and were charged a fee, sort of a deposit for your good faith effort to return that container to redeem your initial deposit. This deposit is called the CRV or the California Redemption Value.

The Department of Conservation estimates that Californians bought over 20 billion beverages in recyclable containers such as aluminum, glass, and plastic in 2007. Just more than 12 billion of these were estimated to have been recycled for their redemption values. Of the 20 billion containers, 10.04 billion of them were aluminum containers mainly in the form of the ever-popular soft drink can.

In order to encourage increased participation in recycling, the redemption values were recently raised. As of July 1, 2007, container redemption values were increased to 5¢ for containers less than 24 ounces and up to 10¢ for containers 24 ounces and larger. Some product containers do not have a CRV fee attached to them. Products such as milk, medical food, nutritional supplements, wine, and 100% fruit juices in containers 46 ounces or more and vegetable juices in containers larger than 16 ounces are exempt from the CRV fee. If you are charged a CRV fee at

the register for one of these products, you are being overcharged and should contact our office.



As a consumer, if you buy just one 12 pack of soda-pop in a week for your family, you will be charged 60¢ a week, about \$2.50 per month or \$30 per year. This CRV fee is taxable if the product associated with it is a taxable item. When you buy soft drinks, you may be charged a tax on the soda and the CRV fee as well. It's all legal.

At today's prices, aluminum scrap goes for just over \$1.50 a pound. About 32 aluminum soda cans (12 fluid ounce size) weigh a pound. There are two main recyclers doing business throughout the state and they have kiosks located in larger shopping centers.

These recycling centers are required to use certified scales to purchase your containers. Make sure that you are paid the correct amount and that the scale is certified and used properly. Make sure that the weighing is done in your presence and that you can see the scale and the total weight it registers because that weight is used to determine your payment. Use the count to weight ratio described above to get a general idea of what your items should be worth

before you sell them. In recent months, we have received an increasing number of complaints from consumers claiming they were underpaid in value for the purchase of their recyclable items.

If you cannot redeem the CRV fee yourself make an effort to recycle them by donating them to charity or even placing them in the city recycle containers so that they can make their way back in to circulation and not to a land fill. For more information you can visit the State's Department of Conservation at: www.conservation.ca.gov/DOR/Pages/Index.aspx

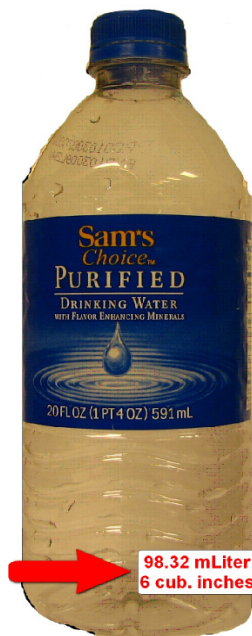


Retail Motor Fuels

So exactly how much is a gallon of gasoline when it is measured in the volumetric unit of cubic inches?

A gallon of gasoline at a standard temperature of 60° Fahrenheit is measured at 231 cubic inches. If the price of gasoline was \$2.31 per gallon, one penny would buy you a one cubic inch volume of gasoline.

To put that in perspective with today's gasoline prices of \$3.20, one cubic inch of gasoline will cost you \$0.0138 or 1 and 1/3 pennies. So how much is one cubic inch of gasoline? One cubic inch converts to 16.388 milliliters. A typical retail dispenser test consists of a five gallon fuel delivery into a certified measuring standard. At five gallons, a meter in service has a tolerances limit of plus or minus 6 cubic inches. Six cubic inches translates to 98.328 milliliters which is what you see marked at the tip of the arrow in the figure of a standard water bottle. Six cubic inches out of a five gallon delivery is just over 1/4 of one percent.



Changes in 2009



Even though 2008 has just begun, we must plan for our operations in 2009. To cover the increased costs of fuel, utilities, salaries and benefits, we will request a modest fee increase from the Board of

Supervisors, effective July 1, 2008. Weights & Measures Fees are authorized by the state legislature, which also sets the maximum fee allowed for each device type.

Our proposal is for a \$10 increase in the Location Fee, and an increase of \$2 for most retail devices to \$25 for vehicle scales. Scanner inspection fees will increase by \$18 for 1-3 point of sale stations and \$26 for 4 or more stations, if the request is granted. A full description of the proposal will be available from the Department or Board of Supervisors in April.

We are mindful of the impact fees have on business, and our proposal will hold fees 20% below the maximum allowed. We have used the same fee schedule for two years, and as any other business, have watched our costs rise to the point where they can no longer be absorbed or expenses postponed without affecting our core activities.

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