

Weights & Measures Week

Every day, Marylanders pay for consumer products based on a weight or measurement, like a gallon of gas or a cord of wood. The Maryland Department of Agriculture is responsible for inspecting the accuracy of weighing and measuring devices and helping ensure that consumer get what they pay for. To honor this important work, Governor Martin O'Malley has issued a proclamation declaring March 1-7 Weights and Measures Week in Maryland. This week also commemorates the 213th anniversary of the signing of the first weights and measures law in the United States on March 2, 1799.

“Maryland Department of Agriculture’s inspectors continue to play an increasingly important role in assuring that consumers and businesses have a level playing field in the marketplace,” said Agriculture Secretary Buddy Hance. “We want residents and visitors alike to be aware that there are regulations we work to enforce that protect and ensure fairness in commercial transactions involving anything sold by weight, measure or count.”

In Fiscal Year 2011, MDA field staff conducted more than 37,500 inspections of commercial weighing and measuring devices, inspected and tested more than 9,200 individual lots of prepackaged commodities (representing approximately 230,000 packages) offered for sale, and investigated more than 560 consumer complaints. Price verification inspections were conducted at 138 non food stores. Thirty seven firms received civil penalties for misrepresenting unit price violations. In Fiscal Year 2011, Weights and Measures imposed \$83,500 in civil penalties for violations.

In Maryland, there are more than 60,700 weighing and measuring devices in commercial use at 9,200 business locations. MDA’s Weights and Measures inspectors test these devices which include: cash register scales, price scanning equipment, fuel pumps, meters to measure home fuel oil deliveries, highway truck scales and other measuring devices used to determine the price of a product sold to a consumer. Weights and Measures inspectors randomly check packaged goods to make sure they contain the quantity printed on the label. Inspectors also investigate consumer complaints that range from common gas pump grievances to mulch delivery or deli scale complaints.

MDA’s 18 specially trained and certified inspectors keep pace with rapidly advancing technologies to ensure fairness in the marketplace. Business sectors currently use the most recent advancements in technology to determine quantities. Cutting-edge weighing and measuring equipment is also used by everyday places such as supermarkets and gasoline stations. “New innovations are being used more than ever, so it’s extremely important that consumers and businesses are protected,” said Weights and Measures Chief Ken Ramsburg.

Weights and Measures Week provides an opportunity to educate consumers, businesses and lawmakers about the quiet but systematic effort of the state and local weights and measures officials who have instilled so much trust in our marketplace. Americans seldom question the quantity statement on a package, the scale at a check stand, or the gallons they put into their cars and even fewer would know who is responsible for instilling that confidence.

For more information on the Weights and Measures Program in Maryland, or if you think the “cord” of firewood delivered to your home is a short measure, the gasoline pump at the corner station is incorrect, or the weight or measure of any product you purchased is incorrect, and you cannot get the seller to resolve the problem, contact the Maryland Department of Agriculture, Weights and Measures Section, 50 Harry S Truman Parkway, Annapolis, MD 21401, (410) 841-5790. For more information about Maryland Weights and Measures, visit www.mda.maryland.gov.