

# Agricultural Commissioner - Weights and Measures Division

## Background

George Washington's first message to Congress in 1790 included a plea for uniformity in weights and measures. Despite continued efforts for laws to regulate weights and measures, the first effective law was not passed until 1828. In 1911, the National Conference on Weights and Measures adopted a model law drafted by the National Bureau of Standards. The new national organization now called the National Institute of Standards and Technology revised the model law. California, including Riverside County, has adopted this with a few minor revisions.

The Weights and Measures Division of Riverside County has six field employees and is responsible for the accuracy of most commercial weighing and measuring devices tested annually. These include all gas station pumps, store scales, truck scales, commercial water dispensers, taxi fare meters and store scanners. Public utility meters such as gas, water and electric are exempt except those within the confines of mobile home parks.

## Findings

1. The county's rapid growth has resulted in an increase of the workload in the division.
2. The state and county are cooperating in inspections of gasoline nozzles and hoses for emissions control. While doing routine inspections they also, under the Petroleum Agreement, inspect petroleum industry products such as signs, labeling, advertising, oils, antifreeze, etc. This process encompasses more than 500 locations.
3. Instruments used by the Department of Weights and Measures to test commercial weighing and measuring devices are tested annually for accuracy by the state inspectors.
4. The county inspectors are about six months behind schedule because of complaint investigations taking priority and the time spent doing their own clerical work.
5. Within its three district offices (Riverside, San Jacinto and Blythe), Weights and Measures has assigned inspections at 2,819 locations. These inspections include small devices such as scales and water dispensers. Also included are the inspections of fabric and cordage. The method used for these types of inspections is the use of regular tape measures sealed to ensure accuracy, and metal-tipped yardsticks to ensure accuracy of length. Wire is measured by a device mounted on a stand. The wire is fed through a series of wheels that measure the length on the attached meter.
6. Additional primary inspections include:
  - a. All gas stations with twelve or more pumps inspected using a specially-equipped truck capable of holding the large liquid capacity needed for

- testing. The smaller stations are inspected by using hand-carried five-gallon containers.
- b. Air Quality Management District random inspections on any stations within the county.
  - c. Wholesale meters, petroleum delivery trucks and stationary meters using specialized equipment.
  - d. Liquid petroleum gas meters, delivery trucks and stationary dispensers.
  - e. Taxi fare meters and odometers on ambulances.
7. Weights and Measures does not use volunteer citizens to purchase products and do comparison shopping from various merchants.

## **Recommendations**

Board of Supervisors authorize:

1. The addition of at least one inspector to keep the department current on scheduled inspections.
2. The procurement of three laptop computers in lieu of hiring a clerical person. These laptops would be used by inspectors in the field to directly input data. Upon returning to the office, the inspectors then could download the information directly into the Agricultural Commissioner's mainframe, thus increasing productivity in the field.
3. The purchase of at least one hand-held scanner for use in various types of stores. This scanner would be used to confirm pricing of store products. This would increase the speed and efficiency of Weights and Measures inspectors by eliminating the necessity of taking products to the cashier.
4. The use of volunteer shoppers to purchase products. These products would then be inspected by department inspectors to ensure that the public is receiving the proper quantity for the purchase price.