

# You should know...



North Dakota Public Service Commission

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North Dakota Public  
Service Commission

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## Weights & Measures Consumer Tips

Small, seemingly insignificant errors can add up. If a scale used to weigh coffee beans is incorrect by 0.01 pound on each weighing, after 100 weighings a day for 300 days a year at a unit price of \$7.99 a pound, the resulting error will amount to \$2,397 per year.

The individual consumer would not be aware of the loss. The only way to know if the scale was in error would be to test it. To minimize the chance of this happening to you:

- Always check for a state Weights and Measures or Registered Service Company (a private weights and measures inspector) "**TESTED AND APPROVED**" seal, which by law, must be displayed on each commercial weighing or measuring device. This seal tells you that the device has been inspected for proper design and installation and tested for accuracy.
- Be sure that you can see the scale display and that nothing is blocking your view of the scale. This assures you that the scale is zeroed prior to the weighing and that additional weight is not being added to the scale out of your sight.
- There should not be anything on the scale or touching or obstructing the pan of the scale during the weighing. Sales clerks should remove their hand completely from any items being weighed. Also, check the clearance around the scale pan - is it

free of debris that could interfere with the weighing?

- Be cautious of scales that appear in poor condition and are not well maintained. Scales with broken glass or those that are not level can't be used commercially. These poorly maintained devices are more likely to be in error.

A gasoline pump is another device in which there is a potential for small errors to add up to big money. Errors are measured by "cubic inches." One cubic inch is approximately equal to one tablespoon. With 231 cubic inches in a gallon of gasoline, an error of one cubic inch at the average station (one that sells 100,000 gallons per month @ \$1.15 per gallon) will result in shortages to the consumer in excess of \$6,000 per year. Again, this is an error that individual consumers would not notice. An alert gas buyer might get suspicious if there was an error of 30 cubic inches (0.13 gallon), but the small errors require exact testing equipment to catch. To minimize the chance for error while purchasing gasoline, diesel fuel, or propane:

- Always check for a state Weights and Measures or Registered Service Company (a private weights and measures inspector) "**TESTED AND APPROVED**" seal, which by law, must be displayed on each commercial weighing or measuring device. This seal tells you that the device has been inspected for proper design and installation and tested for accuracy.
- If the dispensers appear to be poorly maintained outside, they are probably

# Weights & Measures Consumer Tips (cont.)

not maintained inside. Broken glass, leaking hoses, unreadable displays, or automatic shut-off devices not working are some of the things to look for.

- Make sure the price on the advertising sign is the same as the price at the pump. If you really want to make sure it's the advertised price, stop dispensing fuel at exactly one gallon. The advertised price should match the pump price.

State law makes the owner of any commercial weighing or measuring device responsible for its maintenance, accuracy, and proper operation.

If you have any suspicions regarding the condition or operation of any commercial weighing or measuring device, call the Public Service Commission at 701-328-2400 or e-mail [sbauske@nd.gov](mailto:sbauske@nd.gov).