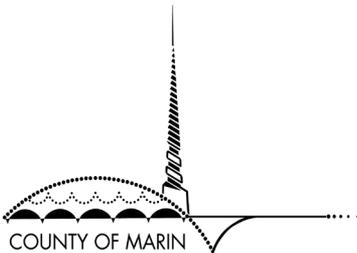


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2017  
Consumer Protection Report

**DOLLAR\$**  
**&**  
**SENSE**

*protecting the interests  
of the consumer  
and the marketplace*



DEPARTMENT OF WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

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Marin County Board of Supervisors  
**Damon Connolly**, District 1  
**Katie Rice**, District 2  
**Kathrin Sears**, District 3  
**Dennis Rodoni**, District 4  
**Judy Arnold**, District 5

Dear Supervisors:

I am pleased to submit the second annual Consumer Protection Report for Marin County. This report highlights some of the consumer protection services that the Department of Weights and Measures provided to the residents, visitors, and businesses of Marin in 2017.

One of the basic foundations of any civilization is trade and commerce. No society can prosper unless its citizens are conducting business. And it is through accurate weights and measures that we ensure that the business conducted is fair and honest.

John Quincy Adams in an 1821 report to the U.S. Senate said, "Weights and measures may be ranked among the necessities of life, to every individual of human society. They enter into the economical arrangements and daily concerns of every family ... every occupation ... every transaction of trade and commerce ..."

Whether you're buying vegetables at a farmers' market, filling up your gas tank, or taking your kids to do back-to-school shopping, Marin is a great place to shop and do business. In 2017, our inspectors performed over 9,100 inspections to ensure the accuracy of weighing and measuring devices, and prices charged to consumers.

Our Department serves the public's interest by ensuring accuracy and equity in the marketplace and protecting the health and welfare of Marin's residents.

Respectfully submitted,



Stacy K. Carlsen  
Agricultural Commissioner  
Director of Weights and Measures

## NUMBERS at a GLANCE

Weights and Measures Expenditures .....	\$601,842
Weights and Measures Revenue .....	\$253,184
Total Employees .....	15
Weights and Measures FTE* Employees .....	2.7
Total Weights and Measures Program Hours ....	5,258
Businesses Inspected .....	403
Total Inspections Performed .....	9,141
Consumer Concerns Investigated .....	34
Price Accuracy Inspections Performed .....	279
Items Inspected for Price Accuracy .....	7,178
Items Found Overcharged to the Customer .....	102
Items Found Undercharged to the Customer .....	81
Devices Inspected and Sealed .....	1,902
Most Common Devices Inspected:	
• Gas Pumps .....	736
• Electric Submeters .....	610
• Counter and Computing Scales .....	401
Notices of Violation Issued .....	128
Most Common Violations:	
• Equipment not maintained accurately	
• Overcharging customers	
• Customer not able to see price or weight of item at time of purchase	

\*FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT

# PRICE ACCURACY

Weights and Measures inspectors regularly conduct pricing audits at businesses with automated point-of-sale systems (e.g., UPC\* or price look-up codes) to verify that prices charged to customers are the same as the prices posted or advertised.



When these systems are inaccurate, customers may be overcharged and unaware they've paid more than the posted or advertised price.

It's against the law for a business to charge more than the price advertised or posted by the store.

Inspectors also make sure the customer can easily see the price of each item as it's being rung up. State law requires businesses to have a customer-facing display.

## CONSUMER QUIZ:

YOU SEE AN ITEM ON A SHELF FOR \$2.99, BUT THE PRICE RINGS UP AS \$3.49 WHEN YOU CHECK OUT.

WHICH PRICE SHOULD YOU PAY?

ANSWER: **\$2.99**

*THE LOWEST POSTED OR ADVERTISED PRICE*



**83%** OF MARIN BUSINESSES COMPLIED WITH PRICE ACCURACY REGULATIONS IN 2017

\*UPC (Universal Product Code) or barcode

# GAS PUMPS

Have you ever noticed the County of Marin seal when you're pumping gas?

If you see this seal on the pump, you can rest assured that county inspectors have tested and verified the pump for measuring accuracy.

Commercial fuel pumps, such as those dispensing gasoline, diesel, propane, and hydrogen, must function correctly to deliver the amount of fuel for which you're charged.

Also, pricing at the pump must be clearly visible and must match the prices displayed on the street signs.



## CONSUMER TIP:

WHENEVER YOU BUY FUEL, YOU ARE ENTITLED TO FREE AIR AND WATER AT THAT STATION.

SIMPLY ASK THE ATTENDANT TO TURN ON THE AIR AND WATER FOR YOU AND PRESENT YOUR RECEIPT IF NECESSARY.



**96%** OF MARIN GAS PUMPS TESTED IN 2017 WERE FOUND ACCURATE

## DID YOU KNOW?

WHEN WE TEST GAS STATIONS, WE ALSO CHECK FOR CREDIT CARD SKIMMERS. IN 2017, NO CREDIT CARD SKIMMERS WERE FOUND.

# SCALES

If you've purchased meat at the deli, vegetables at a farmers' market, or paid to ship a box by weight then you've been charged based on the weight of the item.

Scales are regularly tested by our inspectors to ensure each scale meets accuracy standards. The scales tested range from small (jewelry, deli and grocery scales) to medium (recycling centers and landscaping materials) to large capacity (livestock and vehicle scales).

Scales found to be inaccurate in favor of the business are placed **OUT OF ORDER**. The scale must be repaired by a certified repair person and tested as accurate before it can be used again by the business.



### CONSUMER TIP:

YOU'RE ENTITLED TO SEE THE WEIGHT OF THE ITEM YOU ARE PURCHASING.

DURING OUR INSPECTIONS WE ENSURE THE SCALE'S DISPLAY IS VISIBLE TO THE CUSTOMER.



**94%** OF MARIN COUNTER AND COMPUTING SCALES TESTED IN 2017 WERE FOUND ACCURATE

### DID YOU KNOW?

WHEN CALIFORNIA BECAME A STATE IN 1850, ONE OF THE FIRST LAWS PASSED WAS TO ESTABLISH WEIGHTS AND MEASURES STANDARDS, UNDERSCORING THE IMPORTANCE OF WEIGHTS AND MEASURES.

# CONSUMER CONCERNS

Consumer confidence can only be gained by ensuring that you, the customer, get what you pay for.

If you have a concern or complaint about a business in Marin County, immediately report it to our office.

## CONSUMER HELP LINES

(415) 473-7888

OR

[marin.dept.ag@marincounty.org](mailto:marin.dept.ag@marincounty.org)

Issues most commonly reported to our Consumer Help Line:

- Being overcharged on items at the grocery store
- The sale price wasn't honored at time of checkout
- Unable to see the price of items rung up during checkout
- Suspected gasoline contamination (engine sputtering or dying shortly after fueling up)
- Misleading advertisements for apparel

### CONSUMER TIP:

BY LAW, IF A SALE SIGN IS STILL ON DISPLAY - EVEN IF THE SALE HAS EXPIRED - YOU'RE STILL ENTITLED TO THAT SALE PRICE.

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# COUNTY OF MARIN

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

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CRS Dial 711

<http://www.marincounty.org/depts/ag>

(415) 473-7888 CONSUMER HELP LINE

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Supervising Agricultural, Weights and Measures Inspector  
Scott Wise

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Emmett Brady	Allison Klein	Susan Ventura	Raoul Wertz

Senior Agricultural Program Assistant  
Eric Richardson

Administrative Services Associate  
Tanya Nelson

Office Assistants  
Mary Wahlberg  
Ellen Breazeale

Requests for accommodations may be made by calling (415) 473-6700 (Voice),  
(415) 473-3232 (TTY) or by e-mail at [SParnay@marincounty.org](mailto:SParnay@marincounty.org).  
Copies of documents are available in alternative formats, upon request.