



## What You Should Know About Weights & Measures

### The Law

The Regulation and Inspection of Weighing and Measuring Devices Amendment Act of 2004 requires all DC businesses to register all Universal Product Code (UPC) scanners; pharmaceutical balances; scales used in dialysis clinics; and commercially-used weighing and measuring devices. DCRA inspects these devices twice a year to make sure they are properly calibrated and that they display accurately.

### How Do DCRA Inspections Help You?

- When you buy foods by weight, like meat, fruit, and vegetables, the grocer uses **scales** we've checked for accuracy.
- We inspect **packages** to make sure they weigh what their labels say they weigh.
- Stores that use price or **UPC scanners** must pass our inspections: their shelf prices must match their scanned prices.
- By inspecting **jewelers' balances**, we ensure that gems and precious metals are weighed accurately.
- Our inspections of **retail engine fuel meters** ensure that you get what shows on the pump. We also check storage tanks to be sure there's no water in the gas.
- We inspect **prescription balances**, so pharmacists can weigh medicine mixtures accurately.
- We inspect **compressed natural gas meters** to make sure you get what you pay for.
- We help ensure safe health care by inspecting the **dialysis clinic scales** used to check patient weights before and after treatment.
- We inspect **hopper scales**, so concrete, sand, gravel, and asphalt mixtures are measured correctly – before they go into streets, sidewalks, and buildings.
- Our **vehicle scale** inspections help businesses comply with highway load restrictions -- and assure accurate pricing of sand, gravel, asphalt, and scrap metal.
- We inspect **commercially-used yard sticks and tape measurers** – used to measure fabric, building materials (screening, glass, piping) and other products sold by the inch, yard, and foot.

- Our **wire/cordage measures** inspections make sure your wire and rope are the lengths you pay for.

### How Can You Protect Yourself?

To make sure what you buy is measured and weighed correctly:

- Read the package label.
- Pay only for the product, not the package it comes in: for example, make sure the scale doesn't count the weight of the box from the salad bar as part of your salad.
- Check the unit price of the item.
- Check your receipt to see if it matches what you bought.
- Look for a seal from your Weights & Measures Office.

### Tips for Buying Products That Need To Be Weighed & Measured



#### Gasoline and Motor Fuel

- Fuels are sold in gallons.
- The price you pay for gas will depend on the grade; price per gallon; and amount you pump. A computer in the gas pump calculates what you owe based on these factors.
- Be sure the dispenser is set to zero before you start pumping.
- Always check your receipt to make sure the price matches what the pump says.



#### Heating Fuel and Propane

- Home heating fuel is sold in gallons.
- When the seller delivers to your home, he/she must give you a **delivery ticket** with your name and address and the seller's name and address, delivery date, and amount and type of fuel delivered.
- The price per gallon of fuel should also be on the delivery ticket unless you have a special arrangement with the seller.



## Supermarket Scales and Meters

- You can learn a lot from package labels. The amount of the product, or the net quantity, is marked on the package label: as a weight measure, or count – such as ounces, pounds, quarters, liters, or feet.
- Pay only for the product, not for the weight of the container. In many stores, the scales at the check-out counter are set to automatically deduct the weight of the packaging. On other scales, the sales clerk must adjust the scale to subtract the packaging materials. Pay attention to what your clerk does.
- The scale should be placed so you can see the weight, price, and other information displayed.
- The unit price tells you the cost per unit (such ounce, pound, sheet) to buy the product. Compare the unit prices of similar products to find the best buy.

For example:

	ITEM PRICE <b>\$1.99</b>	UNIT PRICE <b>11.3</b> PER OUNCE
	PEANUT BUTTER 18-oz.	
	ITEM PRICE <b>\$2.99</b>	UNIT PRICE <b>10.7</b> PER OUNCE
	PEANUT BUTTER 28-oz.	

Which jar of peanut butter gives you more for your money?

The price for the 18-ounce jar is less – but you pay over half a cent more for each ounce of peanut butter. That's almost 11 cents more for the whole jar.



## Scanners

- In many stores, an electric scanner reads a UPC code on the product or the tag and pulls up the price in the store's computer database.
- At the checkout, watch as the price of the item shows on the register. If the scanned price is not the same as the posted price, ask the store manager to correct it.
- Save the cash register receipt, in case you have questions or a problem later.

## Firewood

- Firewood is sold by the **cord**.
- The cord must equal 128 cubic feet.
- To be sure you have a cord, stack the wood neatly in a line or a row, with individual pieces touching and parallel to each other. Make sure that the wood is compact and has few gaps. Measure: length x width x height to get cubic feet.
- A seller may not legally use terms such as *truckload*, *face cord*, *rack*, or *pile*: these terms have no legal meaning, so you have no way to tell how much firewood you are getting. If a seller uses any of these terms, be very cautious. You may have a problem.
- Be sure to get a receipt that shows the seller's name and address; and the price, amount, and kind of wood.
- If you think you've been short-changed, and the seller can't or won't fix the problem, contact DCRA before you burn any wood.

## If You Have a Problem

If you are not satisfied with how a product has been weighed, measured, or priced:

- Talk with the store owner or manager.
- Give the manager or owner a chance to correct the problem.

If your problem still isn't solved, contact DCRA's Office of Weights & Measures: (202) 698-2130 or go to [dcra.dc.gov](http://dcra.dc.gov). For relay service call 711.

Government of the District of Columbia  
Vincent C. Gray, Mayor

Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs  
Nicholas Majett, Director

