



National Conference on Weights and Measures  
"That Equity May Prevail"

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## **Alaska Shows the Impact of Unregulated Fuel Meters**

LINCOLN, Neb. – State officials in Alaska have reported worrisome inaccuracies in commercial meters used to sell fuel and home heating oil. The meters are located in remote communities that can only be accessed by plane or boat, but which are major hubs of commerce producing millions of dollars' worth of seafood annually.

After decades with no weights & measures enforcement presence, The Alaska Division of Measurement Standards & Commercial Vehicle Enforcement (MSCVE) was able to perform inspections for the first time in three key western Alaska communities. MSCVE reports that approximately 45% of the meters were determined to be out of tolerance; finding 35% in favor of the consumer and 65% in favor of the seller. In one example, a home heating oil meter shorted the consumer by 11.7%. That computes to an extra \$210.60 on the average 300 gallon home heating oil delivery at \$6.00 per gallon. Yet another marine meter was found to be giving away fuel, shorting the seller by 4.7% or \$282.00 on every 1000 gallons delivered to the fishing fleet.

The inequities found in these remote communities are a result of the lack of resources to conduct inspections. Many communities throughout the nation may soon experience the same situation as budgets for weights and measures inspection programs are slashed. Some states have begun to pass legislation that allows businesses to self-regulate by having an employee or a hired service agency perform the official inspections. In other cases official inspections are simply eliminated for lack of funding.

The National Conference on Weights and Measures reports that the cost per resident for weights and measures programs varies among states, but averages nationally about 70 cents per year. In comparison, one study has shown that the regulatory work of each inspector discovers and corrects an estimated \$2 million worth of trade inequity in a year.

"Equity in trade and the oversight of commercial transactions involving weights & measures is truly a core function of our government," said Dan Breeden, MSCVE Director. "Consumers and businesses alike suffer losses from inaccurate measures. It's in everyone's best interest to support a fully funded weights and measures program."

The National Conference on Weights and Measures is a professional nonprofit association of state and local weights and measures officials, federal agencies, manufacturers, retailers and consumers. The organization brings the right interests together to keep pace with innovative advancements in the marketplace.

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