



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

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NCWM Invites Industry Group to Discuss Substandard Motor Oil at Retail

Lincoln, Neb. The National Conference on Weights and Measures (NCWM) reports that noncompliant and potentially damaging motor oil products continue to appear on retail shelves in spite of diligent inspection activity in some states. The Petroleum Quality Institute of America (PQIA) will make a formal presentation and appeal to regulatory officials at NCWM's 99th Annual Meeting on July 15, 2014 in Detroit, Michigan.

PQIA's supporters are the lubricant and additive manufacturers and other industry stakeholders, but its resources are spent on consumer protection by testing and publicly reporting on the quality of petroleum products at retail. Without any regulatory authority to act on its findings, PQIA is looking to collaborate with state agencies.

Some states are already taking enforcement action. The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) ordered City Petroleum and Star Petroleum brands of motor oil off the shelves in September 2013 and Michigan's Attorney General announced felony and misdemeanor charges against 4 individuals in February 2014 as a result of those investigations. In addition, MDARD also issued Stop Sale/Stop Removal orders for Bullseye Automotive Lubricants in October 2013. "We found real problems with both of these company's products," said Craig VanBuren, Director of MDARD's Consumer Protection Section. "Not only did they not contain a full quart, the product inside was not what the labeled stated. In addition, many of the oils contained high levels of silicon and wear metals, both which may cause damage to a vehicle's engine."

Other states reported similar findings to NCWM that extend beyond motor oil to transmission fluids and engine coolants. In some cases, the packages are mislabeled or short-filled. In other cases, the product is of such poor quality it could destroy engine components. Unfortunately, many states either do not have regulatory authority or they lack the resources to regulate quality standards for these automotive products. "We're doing our best to find these products and remove them from shelves in Michigan. Unfortunately, you can still drive right across the border into our neighboring states and purchase them," says VanBuren.

PQIA hopes to remedy that. They will present data to state and local weights and measures officials from across the country at the 99th NCWM Annual Meeting this July showing the magnitude of the problem. They will also discuss possible ways to improve collaboration between their programs and state regulatory agencies.

"PQIA brings decades of experience in lubricants and has a deep understanding of lubricant formulations, specifications, and testing methods" says Thomas F. Glenn, President of PQIA. "Supported by an Advisory Board (AB) consisting of leading lubricant and additive manufactures and a technical sub-committee within the AB, we are able to assist in designing and arranging testing programs, interpreting test results, and assessing product quality against labeled claims," Glenn says. "Combined with the sample collection capability and regulatory authority of state agencies, we can further our efforts to work together to protect consumers from harmful motor oils and transmission fluids."

To date, PQIA has identified over 20 different brands of packaged motor oils and AFTs on retail shelves that can cause damage to car engines or transmissions. In addition, dozens more brands have been found that fail a claimed specification, are short filled, or are labeled with false or misleading claims. The products have been found in most states visited so far and appear to be concentrated in low income areas where consumers are more likely to purchase based on price.

PQIA made a similar presentation to the NCWM Board of Directors in January. The information was deemed of such importance that NCWM requested the encore presentation to a larger audience this summer.

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. NCWM has developed national weights and measures standards since 1905. The organization brings the right interests together to keep pace with innovative advancements in the marketplace.

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