



National Conference on Weights and Measures

"That Equity May Prevail"

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NCWM to Consider Gasoline and Diesel Gallon Equivalents for CNG and LNG

Lincoln, NE: In a hotly debated question of the proper units for sale for compressed and liquefied natural gas as a motor fuel, a special steering committee of the National Conference on Weights and Measures (NCWM) is recommending that the fuel be sold in terms of gasoline and diesel gallon equivalents instead of in units of mass, either pounds or kilograms. The recommendation will be put to a vote this July at the 99th NCWM Annual Meeting in Detroit.

Most U.S. consumers are accustomed to buying motor fuel in gallons. But natural gas isn't metered the way gasoline and diesel are. When a consumer fills up a vehicle with natural gas the dispenser is determining the weight of the product, not the volume. Proponents of the gallon-equivalent units of sale explain that the approach recognizes marketplace conditions including existing dispenser capabilities, consumer awareness and interest comparing alternative fuels with conventional fuels. Others argue that the terminology of gallon equivalents would be establishing a new mass standard. It would also imply the ability to make comparisons of cost or quality between gasoline or diesel and natural gas, but that it is not really possible. It is merely an expression of estimates that may have significant uncertainty.

There is precedent for gallon equivalents. About 20 years ago, NCWM adopted the gasoline gallon equivalent for compressed natural gas. It was debated heavily at the time and now with the introduction of liquefied natural gas some have called for a reversal of the earlier standard. Liquefied natural gas will serve as an alternative fuel source for heavy duty vehicles presently designed to burn diesel.

Attendees of the 99th NCWM Annual Meeting will have the opportunity to comment on the proposals on July 14 and 15, 2014 in open hearings. On July 16 and 17, the proposals are put to a vote of the regulatory officials to determine whether they are adopted into the national standards.

"These standards are of extreme importance to provide national uniformity," explained Mahesh Albuquerque, Steering Committee Chair and Director of the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, Division of Oil and Public Safety. "A uniform method of sale allows consumers compare cost and quantity and allows equipment manufacturers to design systems to meet just one set of requirements." State agencies also need a standard unit for taxation that compares fairly on BTU with taxes levied on other motor fuels. BTU content is a key consideration in that discussion.

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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